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**ORGANIZING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: RANK-AND-FILE TEACHERS'  
ACTIVISM AND SOCIAL UNIONISM IN CALIFORNIA, 1948-1978**

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## **Chapter 1: The Red Schoolteacher: Anti-Communism in the AFT Local 430 and the Blacklisting of Teachers in Los Angeles, 1946-1955**

*“Only the members of our teachers’ union concerned ourselves very deeply and passionately with the burning questions of poverty and unemployment and racism and the quality of life for many Americans that we felt had to be improved.”<sup>1</sup>*

- Frances Eisenberg, Blacklisted Teacher and AFT Local 430 Union Officer, [1977?].

On the evening of November 20, 1952, Jean Wilkinson and Frances Eisenberg read in a local newspaper that the Los Angeles Board of Education had fired them from their teaching positions. They had been called to testify before California’s Un-American Activities Committee on October 28, 1952 on charges of subversion; both Wilkinson and Eisenberg refused to answer the committee’s questions about their political affiliations, and for this the school board fired them.<sup>2</sup> The two women justified their refusal by citing their rights under the First and Fifth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. The First Amendment, they argued, protected their right to freedom of speech and association, while the Fifth Amendment protected them from self-incrimination. Eisenberg explained: “To be compelled by subpoena to give public testimony as ‘evidence’ sensationally headlined and distorted was completely

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<sup>1</sup> Frances Eisenberg, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Greg Goldin Collection (Interviews): Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles, 1977 (hereafter Goldin Collection), tape 1, box 2, Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research (hereafter Southern California Library), Los Angeles, California.

<sup>2</sup> Martha Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty: The Los Angeles School Board vs. Frances Eisenberg* (San Francisco: Caddo Gap Press, 1994), 28.

repugnant to my definition of American citizenship.” Eisenberg further responded to her firing in the newsletter of the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers:

For the last twenty years, I have taught in the Los Angeles City Schools and have endeavored to exemplify in my own life in this community the educational philosophy in which I believe. I have helped train young people to know and respect their Constitution, to participate in their own student body government and school press, to examine critically issues of concern to themselves and their families, to their community, nation, and the world. I have taught them to respect the democratic rights of all persons—of every race, religion and color.<sup>3</sup>

While both were fired over a somewhat narrow technicality—their refusal to answer the committee’s questions—they were called before the committee for their political activism. Both were active members of the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers, a left-led union expelled from the American Federation of Teachers in 1948 because of accusations that the union’s leadership was associated with the Communist Party, USA. Wilkinson was a former officer of the teachers’ union, while Eisenberg had been the long-time editor of its newsletter as well as a member of the union’s executive board. Jean Wilkinson, moreover, was married to Frank Wilkinson, who had himself just recently been fired from his job with the Los Angeles Housing Authority for refusing to testify about his political affiliations. The local press vilified Frank Wilkinson for promoting communism because of his work to expand integrated public housing in Los Angeles.<sup>4</sup> Both Jean Wilkinson and Eisenberg had written

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<sup>3</sup> *The L.A. Teacher*, November 1952 XIII, no. 3, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 1946-1951, folder 3, box 2, Southern California Library.

<sup>4</sup> Don Parson, “Los Angeles’ ‘Headline-Happy Public Housing War’,” *Southern California Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (Fall 1983): 267; Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los*

letters to the Housing Authority in support of public housing. The subpoenas from the California Senate Fact Finding Committee on Un-American Activities to Jean Wilkinson and Eisenberg, then, were issued because of the women's link to Los Angeles Federation of Teachers and their support for integrated public housing in Los Angeles. The firing of Wilkinson and Eisenberg marked the beginning of renewed attacks on supposedly subversive teachers in the Los Angeles public school system.

The blacklisting of teachers in Los Angeles was part of a national effort to root out leftist teachers from the public school system. Jean Wilkinson and Frances Eisenberg were among tens of thousands of teachers across the U.S. investigated during the McCarthy era, and two of approximately 500 teachers who were forced to resign or fired and blacklisted.<sup>5</sup> Historian Ellen Schrecker argues that McCarthyism should be viewed as a “process” and underscores that economic sanctions were an essential element of the Red Scare from the 1940s through the early 1960s. This process began with governmental bodies—at the federal, state, and local levels—identifying individuals suspected of subversion and subpoenaing them to testify about their connections to the Communist Party. Sometimes people were sentenced to prison, but more often the second step resulted in people being fired from their jobs for refusing to testify. This process also resulted in the blacklisting of people from

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*Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 116–117.

<sup>5</sup> Griffin Fariello, *Red Scare: Memories of the American Inquisition: An Oral History* (New York: Norton, 1995), 426.

being able to work in the same industry for many years.<sup>6</sup> The teachers fired from their jobs in Los Angeles were blacklisted from being able to teach in the Los Angeles public school system for several decades, and thus were forced to find jobs in other industries. For many, this meant a demotion in their financial situation, and for all the experience of being forced out of teaching for their political convictions took an emotionally toll still felt decades later.

In this chapter I examine the two related historical events, the blacklisting of teachers in Los Angeles during the late 1940s and 1950s and the expulsion of American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Local 430 from the American Federation of Teachers in 1948. The blacklisting of teachers converged with the expulsion of Local 430 to destroy the left-led teachers' union in Los Angeles. During its lifetime AFT Local 430, which would become the independent Los Angeles Federation of Teachers after its expulsion from the AFT, promoted social unionism. The union put its organizing energies toward protecting and improving the working conditions and compensation of teachers, but it also was engaged politically in the larger social issues of the day, including civil rights struggles in Los Angeles. The union joined with the civil rights movement taking shape in Los Angeles by organizing for the inclusion of African American history in the curriculum of the public school schools, as well as calling for the hiring of more African American teachers. The union leadership focused on larger social issues because of its commitment to racial

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<sup>6</sup> Ellen Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 5.



equality, which was informed by the fact that at least some of the leaders of the union were members of the Communist Party.

When the AFT revoked Local 430's charter because of the union's link with the Communist Party, the AFT simultaneously chartered AFT Local 1021, which it intended to eventually replace Local 430. AFT Local 1021 eschewed Local 430's broad focus, choosing instead to adopt a narrowly defined philosophy toward unionism. Local 1021 promoted its image as a union of professionals concerned primarily with advancing a more limited set of goals relating to the working conditions and compensation of teachers in Los Angeles. I argue that the expulsion of Local 430 and the chartering of Local 1021 in Los Angeles were part of a rightward turn in the American Federation of Teachers, and the American labor movement more broadly, resulting in the widespread adoption of philosophy toward unionism less engaged in larger struggles against social injustice. This set back the struggle against racism in the both the union movement and the public school system in the United States.

Though Local 430 maintained its existence as the independent Los Angeles Federation of Teachers for several years, it ultimately ceased to exist in the late 1950s. The Los Angeles School Board, alongside state investigating committees, sought to drastically decrease the influence of leftist teachers on children in the public school system through the blacklist. The blacklist specifically targeted the leaders of the independent Los Angeles Federation of Teachers in an attempt to finally put an end to left-led teacher unionism in the city of Los Angeles. The blacklist resulted in

the firing of some of the most active leaders of the union. Additionally, the union leaders targeted by the blacklist found their attention necessarily diverted from the issues they normally organized around as they focused their energies on defending fired teachers. The union participated in both legal and grassroots efforts to expose the political nature of the targeting of leftist teachers. The blacklisting of leftist teachers in Los Angeles, then, combined with the expulsion of Local 430 and the chartering of Local 1021, put an end to teacher social unionism in Los Angeles in the 1950s.

Little has been written about the blacklisting of teachers in Los Angeles, but what has been written about the impact of anti-communism on teachers' unions in New York City in the 1940s and 1950s illustrates that a similar pattern took shape elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> Clarence Taylor, in *Reds at the Blackboard: Communism, Civil Rights, and the New York City Teachers Union*, recounts how the AFT revoked the charter of AFT Local 5, the New York City Teachers' Union, at its convention in 1941 on similar charges of Communist Party influence. The Teachers' Union in New York was an independent union only for a short period of time, however; in September of 1943 it joined the United Public Workers of America (UPWA) as the Teachers Union

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<sup>7</sup> For anti-communism within the teachers' unions, see William Edward Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916-1961: A History of the Movement* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975); John F. Lyons, *Teachers and Reform: Chicago Public Education, 1929-1970* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: the AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Philip Taft, *United They Teach: The Story of the United Federation of Teachers* (Los Angeles: Nash Pub., 1974); Clarence Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard: Communism, Civil Rights, and the New York City Teachers Union* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Celia Lewis Zitron, *The New York City Teachers Union, 1916-1964: A Story of Educational and Social Commitment* (New York: Humanities Press, 1969).

of New York, Local 555, an affiliate of the Congress of Industrial Organizations.<sup>8</sup> While the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers never joined the ranks of the United Public Workers of America, the AFT—an affiliate of the CIO’s rival, the American Federation of Labor—did charge Local 430 with sympathizing and organizing in conjunction with the United Public Workers of America against the interests of the AFT and the AFL as one of the reasons for Local 430’s expulsion from the AFT.<sup>9</sup>

The link between the left-led AFT locals and the United Public Workers of America points to a pattern on the part of the Communist Party’s (CP) involvement in the labor movement. Though members of the CP were active in the AFL-affiliated American Federation of Teachers, politically they were much more sympathetic toward CIO-affiliated unions. In fact, as historian Marjorie Murphy has shown in *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980*, though the members of the CP were involved in the CIO in much larger numbers than in the AFL, the CP strategically utilized its involvement in the AFT “as a needed foot in the door of the AFL.”<sup>10</sup>

Scholars including Murphy, Taylor, William Eaton, Jonna Perrillo and Philip Taft have focused on the history of the AFT’s purging of the New York Teachers Union, but have said little about the effects of anti-communism in California. The AFT’s revocation of Local 430’s charter, however, marked the culmination of efforts

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<sup>8</sup> Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*, 73.

<sup>9</sup> “Summary of A.F. of T. Council Action in Connection with Revocation of Charter Local #430 Los Angeles,” American Federation of Teachers Collection, series IV, Defunct Locals, (hereafter AFT Collection), folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10, Walter P. Reuther Library (hereafter Reuther Library), Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

<sup>10</sup> Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 159.

within the AFT to remove the influence of left-led AFT locals.<sup>11</sup> The history of the AFT in Los Angeles, then, is significant because it marks a political transition within the AFT at the national level. Clarence Taylor shows in *Reds at the Blackboard* that the New York City Teachers Union advocated an anti-racist inflected version of social unionism because of the influence of the Communist Party. Taylor argues that the New York Teachers' Union advocated social movement unionism, establishing alliances with civil rights groups and organizing alongside black and Latino parents to challenge racial inequality in the schools and in the community.<sup>12</sup> As did Local 5 in New York, the Los Angeles-based Local 430 also advocated a version of social unionism shaped by a commitment to anti-racism. What started with the purging of the New York Teachers Union from the AFT in 1941, then, concluded in 1948 with the ouster of the Los Angeles-based teachers' union, AFT Local 430. While both unions attempted to maintain their existence independent of the AFT, the intense anti-communism of the boards of education in both cities proved to be too devastating. This resulted in the demise of a variety of social movement unionism in the American Federation of Teachers that prioritized the struggle against racism within the union movement and in the public schools.

Marjorie Murphy, in *Blackboard Unions* (1990), primarily focuses on the various obstacles to unionization for public school teachers. She points out that

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<sup>11</sup> Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916-1961*; Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*; Jonna Perrillo, *Uncivil Rights: Teachers, Unions, and Race in the Battle for School Equity* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2012; Taft, *United They Teach*; Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*.

<sup>12</sup> Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*, 3.

“recurrent seasons of red-baiting” were an important obstacle to unionization. Murphy argues, “they created an atmosphere of fear that destroyed militant teacher activity and stifled teacher advocacy.”<sup>13</sup> In this chapter I argue, like Murphy, that red-baiting was indeed an important obstacle to public sector unionism, particularly among public school teachers in Los Angeles. I also agree that McCarthyism helped to decrease teacher union militancy. However, Murphy also maintains that teachers’ unions became increasingly concentrated on the “narrow self-interest” of teachers “because that is all our conservative society has allowed.”<sup>14</sup> On the contrary, I argue that though the anti-communist leadership of the AFT was of course influenced by the arguably hysterical anti-communism prevalent in the 1940s and the 1950s, the leadership of the AFT was actively complicit in the transformation of the AFT into a less militant, more narrowly focused union beginning in 1940, several years before the Red Scare took off.

One clear contributing factor to the redbaiting of Local 430 in Los Angeles was the advocacy by some union members that the union should act more professionally by eschewing any focus on larger political issues and focusing almost exclusively on the interests of teachers. One of Murphy’s central arguments in *Blackboard Unions* is that “the ideology of professionalism in education grew into a powerful antiunion slogan that effectively paralyzed and then slowed the unionization of teachers.”<sup>15</sup> Murphy also describes how a younger generation of teacher union

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<sup>13</sup> Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

activist in the 1930s, particularly members of the Communist Party and other leftists, gained a foothold in the American Federation of Teachers. Murphy writes that the “old-timers in the union had uncomfortably clung to professionalism in asserting the meaning of teacher autonomy, while the younger generation cared little for the promised rewards of professionalism in a time of few jobs, little money, and the threat of no future.”<sup>16</sup> My research on teacher unionism in Los Angeles adds to Murphy’s argument; supporters of unionization within the Los Angeles Teachers’ Union advocated for what they called a more “professional” version of teacher unionism as opposed to the unionism supported by the leftist leaders and members of AFT Local 430. Thus, this ideology of professionalism informed the shape that teacher unionism would take during McCarthyism, helping in the political transformation of teacher unionism in Los Angeles in the 1940s through the 1950s from a radical, anti-racist social unionism to a more politically moderate unionism.

William Eaton, in *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916-1961: A History of the Movement* (1975), discusses the expulsion of left-led locals from the AFT, but does not consider how the CP’s commitment to anti-racism influenced the AFT’s racial politics. For example, in his discussion of the Communist Party’s politics Eaton does not mention the CP’s commitment to black civil rights struggles.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, in his discussion of New York’s left-led AFT Local 5, Eaton mentions the union’s formation of the Harlem Committee in 1935, explaining that the committee provided curricular materials to teachers about African American history.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>17</sup> Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916-1961*, 105.

But what Eaton does not mention is that AFT Local 5's establishment of the Harlem Committee stemmed largely from local union leadership's affiliation with the CP, which prioritized anti-racism in its organizing. Because Eaton does not consider the influence of the CP's racial politics on the AFT's commitment to racial equality, he also does not acknowledge that the AFT's expulsion of left-led unions resulted in the AFT becoming less politically committed to the civil rights struggle. As a result, Eaton is overly sanguine about the AFT's racial politics during the 1940s and 1950s, even arguing, "at no time, however, is there any evidence that the American Federation of Teachers was anything but unified in its strong advocacy for the black American."<sup>18</sup> By contrast, I argue that the AFT's expulsion of left-led unions influenced a political transition in the union from a racial politics based in radicalism to one based in liberalism. As a consequence, the AFT became not only less militant in its advocacy of racial equality but less committed to the civil rights struggle as a whole.

The expulsion of AFT Local 430 from the American Federation of Teachers represents the weakening of democratic practices within the union. The anti-communist crusade within the AFT clearly represented antagonism toward political dissent, setting the stage for the further strengthening of centralization in the affairs of the AFT. However, my research shows that democratic practices within the communist-led Local 430 could have been improved as well, evidenced by the complaints of more politically conservative union members that the leftist leadership

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 64, 71.

of Local 430 often displayed intolerance toward them. Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin argue that because communist-led unions in the CIO had “an intense commitment to confront a broad range of public issues...transcending the matters dealt with in collective bargaining,” it was “likely that conflicts would arise over these issues in the unions they led; this, in turn, encouraged organized opposition to them and, consequently, factionalism and democracy.”<sup>19</sup> This was certainly true in Local 430’s case, as seen in both the formation of a dissident caucus within the local in the late 1940s which protested the local’s focus on broad social issues. While the democratic practices within Local 430 are open to critique, the ultimate result of expelling Local 430 and other communist-led locals from the AFT was a decrease in the tolerance of dissent, and therefore an overall weakening of democracy.

Numerous historians, including Ellen Schrecker, Nelson Lichtenstein, Michael Honey, Robin Kelley, Maurice Isserman, Ronald Filippelli, George Lipsitz, and Rosemary Feurer, have shown how anti-communism weakened the labor movement from the 1930s to the 1950s, both by reshaping the politics of unionism and by shifting the labor movement’s focus from expanding unionism to infighting to root out leftists.<sup>20</sup> Schrecker, in the anthology *American Labor and the Cold War*, writes

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<sup>19</sup> Judith Stepan-Norris, *Left Out: Reds and America’s Industrial Unions* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 85.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Paul Buhle, *Taking Care of Business: Samuel Gompers, George Meany, Lane Kirkland, and the Tragedy of American Labor* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999); Robert W. Cherny, William Issel, and Kieran Walsh Taylor, eds., *American Labor and the Cold War: Grassroots Politics and Postwar Political Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Rosemary Feurer, *Radical Unionism in the Midwest, 1900-1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press,



of the anti-communist crusade within labor in the 1940s and 1950s, “if nothing else, McCarthyism tamed American labor and brought it into the Cold War political consensus.”<sup>21</sup> Anti-communism within the labor movement resulted in the destruction of many left-led unions, and even those that did ultimately survive, like the International Union of Electrical, Radio, and Machine Employees (UE), maintained their existence in a much weakened state.<sup>22</sup>

In his history of the Communist Party, the labor movement, and anti-racism in the Alabama in the 1930s, Robin D.G. Kelley shows that the anti-communism in the South was often a veil for racism. The Communist Party of Alabama in the 1930s, composed largely of poor black workers, actively challenged racism in the South by organizing black workers and sharecroppers, denouncing lynchings, organizing for voting rights, and calling attention to police brutality, among other issues. Kelley argues, “Communist led rank-and-file committees were the only organized voices within the labor movement to consistently fight against racial discrimination and to

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1990); Robert Rodgers Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?: The American Communist Party During the Second World War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor* (New York: Basic Books, 1995); George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); James J. Matles, *Them and Us: Struggles of a Rank-and-File Union* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1974); Steven Rosswurm, ed., *The CIO's Left-Led Unions* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Shelton Stromquist, ed. *Labor's Cold War: Local Politics in a Global Context* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> Ellen Schrecker, “Labor and the Cold War: The Legacy of McCarthyism,” in Robert W. Cherny, William Issel, and Kieran Walsh Taylor, eds., *American Labor and the Cold War*, 7.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 10. For what happened to the UE, see Ronald Filipelli, *Cold War in the Working Class: The Rise and Decline of the United Electrical Workers* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

build alliances between strikers in different issues.”<sup>23</sup> Kelley further draws out the link between anti-communism and racism in the South, “anti-Communist propaganda, rooted in popular myths and indisputably couched in the language of race, proved a mighty deterrent to Southern white support for the CP.”<sup>24</sup> Though the anti-communism in the South was inflected with a much more virulent racism, it is also the case that anti-communism in the public schools and AFT Local 430 ultimately weakened the struggle against racism in Los Angeles, just as it did in the South.

As Michael Honey has shown, anti-communism within the CIO facilitated the defeat of unionization in the South in the late 1940s, demonstrating how the Red Scare within the labor movement reduced the ability of the union movement to expand to unorganized sectors of American society. Honey argues that anti-communism helped to facilitate the failure of the CIO’s Operation Dixie, the CIO’s attempt to unionize the South. Organizing the South, according to Honey, “required a deep commitment to struggling for black civil rights” in part because black workers held a large proportion of the jobs in most of the non-union sectors of the economy, with the exception of textiles. Honey argues, “to organize them would require breaking down the racism of white workers and resisting the paternalistic ideology and racism of owners.”<sup>25</sup> But anti-communism within the CIO led to the purging of the left-led unions most committed to the struggle for racial equality. Consequently, instead of organizing unions with a significant number of black workers, the CIO

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<sup>23</sup> Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 76.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Honey, “Operation Dixie, the Red Scare, and the Defeat of Southern Labor Organizing,” in Cherny, Issel, and Taylor, *American Labor and the Cold War*, 221.

concentrated its energies on organizing the white-dominated textile industry, an ultimately unsuccessful effort. The CIO, moreover, hired conservative white male organizers in order to “belie the image of the CIO as a radical outsider.”<sup>26</sup>

Considering that the vast majority of unionized industries were in the private sector prior to the 1960s, with important exceptions, little has been written about the link between the Communist Party and public sector workers. Joshua Freeman’s history of the Transportation Workers Union of America (TWU) is one such exception. Because it was not until 1958 that the New York City government agreed to bargain with government employees, the TWU was unable to establish contracts for transportation workers in New York. Freeman shows, however, how the Communist Party’s influence on the TWU was a significant factor in the union’s militancy and growth in the 1930s. However, in the larger context of the Cold War, anti-communism also impacted the TWU: Freeman explains that in early 1948, a year-long factional fight ensued, ending in the expulsion of Communists from positions of power within the union.<sup>27</sup> With the defeat of the Communists, a political

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 226; Also see, Alan Draper, *Conflict of Interests: Organized Labor and the Civil Rights Movement in the South, 1954-1968* (Ithaca, N.Y: ILR Press, 1994); Barbara S. Griffith, *The Crisis of American Labor: Operation Dixie and the Defeat of the CIO* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); Michael K. Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights: Organizing Memphis Workers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*; Robert Rodgers Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Timothy J. Minchin, *The Color of Work: The Struggle for Civil Rights in the Southern Paper Industry, 1945-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Timothy J. Minchin, *Fighting Against the Odds: A History of Southern Labor Since World War II* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005); Robert H. Zieger, ed., *Life and Labor in the New South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> Joshua B. Freeman, *In Transit: The Transport Workers Union in New York City, 1933-1966* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 286.

transition ensued within the TWU, including the drastic centralization of power in the hands of the president and the union's executive board.<sup>28</sup>

I argue here that anti-communism within the American Federation of Teachers redirected the energies of leaders of the teacher union movement from expanding teacher unionism toward rooting out leftists. As a result, the cause of teacher unionism, and public sector unionism in general, was weakened in the 1940s and 1950s. As Schrecker observes, the destruction of left-led unions "disrupted their organizing campaigns in the service sector and among white collar and professional workers, as well as their efforts to bring in women and people of color whom traditional unions had largely ignored."<sup>29</sup> The rise of the public sector union movement, at least in part as a consequence of anti-communism, was delayed until the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 317.

<sup>29</sup> Schrecker, "Labor and the Cold War," in Cherny, Issel, and Taylor, *American Labor and the Cold War*, 16.

<sup>30</sup> For more on the history of public sector unionism in the United States, see Stanley Aronowitz, *From the Ashes of the Old: American Labor and America's Future* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1998); Aaron Brenner, "Striking Against the State: The Postal Wildcat of 1970," *Labor's Heritage*, no. 7 (April 1996): 4–27; Ralph J. Flynn, *Public Work, Public Workers* (Washington: New Republic Book Co, 1975); Steve Fraser and Joshua B. Freeman, "In the Rearview Mirror: A Brief History of Opposition to Public Sector Unionism," *New Labor Forum* 20, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 93–96; Freeman, *In Transit*; Joseph C. Goulden, *Jerry Wurf: Labor's Last Angry Man* (New York: Atheneum, 1982); Paul Johnston, *Success While Others Fail: Social Movement Unionism and the Public Workplace* (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 1994); Leo Kramer, *Labor's Paradox: the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO* (New York: Wiley, 1962); Joseph A. McCartin, "'A Wagner Act for Public Employees': Labor's Deferred Dream and the Rise of Conservatism, 1970–1976," *The Journal of American History* 95, no. 1 (June 2008): 123–48; Joseph A. McCartin, *Collision Course: Ronald Reagan, the Air Traffic Controllers, and the Strike That Changed America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Philip F. Rubio, *There's Always Work at the Post Office: African American Postal Workers and the Fight for Jobs, Justice, and Equality* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Francis

## The Red Scare

With the end of the Second World War in 1945, the tentative alliance between the Soviet Union and the United States came to end, marking the beginning of the Cold War. Internationally, the United States sought both to stamp out the influence of the Soviet Union and to weaken the efforts of countries to adopt policies resembling socialism, particularly in the Third World.<sup>31</sup> Domestically, the late 1940s brought immense repression against the Communist Party and others marked as “subversives,” harkening back to the days of the first Red Scare after World War I. This period of repression became known as McCarthyism, after U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy who infamously oversaw investigations into supposed communist infiltration of the government. McCarthyism had devastating impact on American society. It legitimized what became known as “witch hunts” against current and past members of the Communist Party and other leftists, slowing down, altering or halting grassroots efforts to create social change. McCarthyism’s goal to stamp out leftist dissent also had a clear chilling effect on freedom of speech and the freedom of

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Ryan, *AFSCME’s Philadelphia Story: Municipal Workers and Urban Power in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011); Robert Schaffer, “Where Are the Organized Public Employees? The Absence of Public Employee Unionism from U.S. History Textbooks, and Why It Matters,” *Labor History* 43, no. 3 (August 2002): 315–34; Joseph E. Slater, *Public Workers: Government Employee Unions, the Law, and the State, 1900-1962* (Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press, 2004); Leo Troy, *The New Unionism in the New Society: Public Sector Unions in the Redistributive State* (Fairfax: George Mason University Press, 1994); “Bringing the State’s Workers In: Time to Rectify and Imbalanced Labor Historiography,” *Labor History* 47, no. 1 (2006): 73–94.

<sup>31</sup> See the recently published book by Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War in the Third World* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013) for an analysis of the U.S. efforts to contain communism in the Third World.

political association, both rights protected under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Many people were fired and blacklisted from their jobs, which often took a heavy emotional and financial toll. The government targeted the labor movement during the Red Scare, and the labor movement staged its own anti-communist campaign in its own ranks. McCarthyism had many targets, but the Red Scare in education was particularly virulent. Anti-communists at the federal, state, and local levels targeted public school teachers, resulting in many teachers being fired or resigning. Like the situation in New York, the Red Scare had a particularly negative impact on education in California.<sup>32</sup>

The domestic Cold War after World War II was galvanized on March 22, 1947 when Democratic president Harry Truman issued Executive Order 9835. Establishing a loyalty-security program for federal workers, Executive Order 9835 barred communists, fascists, other “totalitarians”, and anybody guilty of “sympathetic associations” with such people or their organizations from working for the federal government. Schrecker argues that the Executive Order had more to do with the

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<sup>32</sup> For histories of McCarthyism, see Edward Alwood, *Dark Days in the Newsroom: McCarthyism Aimed at the Press* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007); Bob Blauner, *Resisting McCarthyism: To Sign or Not to Sign California's Loyalty Oath* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); David Caute, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1978); Phillip Deery, *Red Apple: Communism and McCarthyism in Cold War New York* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014); Thomas Patrick Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Colleen Doody, *Detroit's Cold War: The Origins of Postwar Conservatism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013); Fariello, *Red Scare*; M. J. Heale, *American Anti-Communism: Combating the Enemy Within, 1830-1970* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); Joel Kovel, *Red Hunting in the Promised Land: Anti-Communism and the Making of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998).

Democratic Party protecting itself against claims by the Republican Party that it was soft on communism than with actually rooting out communists from the federal government. Thus, Truman's executive order was "superfluous, except as a political gesture." It nonetheless "succeeded in establishing anti-Communism as the nation's official ideology, and, several years before Senator McCarthy entered the scene, it laid the foundations for the movement we now call McCarthyism." Despite efforts to prove their anti-communist credentials, Democrats were unable to hold onto power for long. Republican president Dwight D. Eisenhower became president in 1953, defeating Democrat Adlai Stevenson by a landslide.<sup>33</sup>

The Red Scare's impact on the Communist Party cannot be understated. One of the earliest and most influential events of the Red Scare occurred during the summer of 1948 when the Truman administration prosecuted the top leadership of the Communist Party under the Smith Act. The Smith Act, passed in 1940, made it a crime to "teach and advocate the overthrow and destruction of the Government of the United States by force and violence."<sup>34</sup> Those convicted could serve ten years in prison and pay a \$10,000 fine.<sup>35</sup> Prosecution resulted in the jailing of the top CP leadership, and redirected the CP's energies toward self-defense, thereby helping to cripple the party. The Smith Act trial, according to Schrecker, also provided the government with a "way to publicize the menace of communism."<sup>36</sup> Even during the 1930s, the peak of the Communist Party's influence in the U.S., membership in the

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<sup>33</sup> Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 4–5.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>35</sup> Fariello, *Red Scare*, 18.

<sup>36</sup> Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 6.



party was not huge.<sup>37</sup> McCarthyism took a strong toll on membership in the party. In 1950 Party membership was at 43,000, and just one year later total membership dropped to 32,000, a clear result of the intensification of the Red Scare.<sup>38</sup>

Truman's Executive Order targeting of federal employees points to a major aspect of McCarthyism—those accused of disloyalty would be fired from their jobs in large numbers. During the Red Scare, only two people were killed and a few hundred ended up spending some time in prison, but many more lost their livelihoods.

Schrecker shows that McCarthyism consisted of a two-stage process. As a first step, people were subpoenaed to testify about their politics. In the second step, if they were uncooperative by refusing to answer questions, they were often fired from their jobs. “The bifurcated nature of this process,” writes Schrecker, “diffused responsibility and made it easier for each participant to dissociate his or her action from the larger whole. Rarely did any single institution handle both stages of McCarthyism. In most cases, it was a government agency which identified the culprits and a private employer which fired them.”<sup>39</sup> This second step in the process—being fired—was the punishment faced by public school teachers when they refused to answer questions about their politics, and it had a devastating effect on teachers.

Through the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, the business community joined with the federal government in order to try to rid the labor movement of communists. The National Association of Manufacturers, taking advantage of public opinion upset at

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>38</sup> Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 4.

<sup>39</sup> Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 9.



the disruptions caused by a strike wave in 1946, helped to draft an amendment to the 1935 National Labor Relations Act, the Taft-Hartley Act. The Act put into place a series of controls on labor unions; its most prominent provisions included the outlawing of the closed shop (which prohibited hiring non-union workers), and a provision allowing states to outlaw union shops. It allowed the government to obtain an 80-day “cooling off” period for strikes, and made secondary boycotts illegal. Among its most important provisions, the Taft-Hartley Act stipulated that top union officers had to sign an affidavit affirming that they were not members of the Communist Party.<sup>40</sup> Unions that refused to comply with this anti-communist provision would be denied the services of the National Labor Relations Board, which could have a potentially debilitating effect on both unionization efforts as well as efforts to hold employers legally accountable for violations of labor law.<sup>41</sup>

The proactive cooperation of major labor leaders with the Taft-Hartley Act would have a lasting impact on the politics and, arguably, strength of the labor movement. Indeed, the cooperation of both major labor federations—the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO)—with McCarthyism in the 1940s and early 1950s helped to drastically weaken and, in many cases, destroy left-led unions. The CIO expelled eleven Communist-led unions between 1949 and 1950, including the United Public Workers of America (UPWA).<sup>42</sup> The AFT, an affiliate of the AFL, was actively attempting to rid the union of

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<sup>40</sup> Cherny, Issel, and Taylor, *American Labor and the Cold War*, 2–3.

<sup>41</sup> Schrecker, “Labor and the Cold War,” in *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>42</sup> Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*, 161.

communists beginning in the early 1940s. The expulsion of left-led unions from the CIO and the AFL was just the beginning. Both the AFL and CIO created competing labor unions, which aggressively raided the left-led unions in an attempt to siphon off their union members.<sup>43</sup> By the mid-1960s, after the brunt of the Red Scare had passed, only two left-led unions remained in tact, the International Longshore and Wherehouse Union (IWLW) and the United Electrical Workers Union (UE), the latter in a much weakened state.<sup>44</sup>

Soon after he was elected president, in 1953 Dwight Eisenhower intensified the Red Scare by issuing Executive Order 10450. It revoked Executive Order 9835 issued under Truman's administration, and expanded the circumstances under which federal employees could be investigated and fired. Previously, the federal government could fire federal employees proved of "disloyalty" because of their present or past affiliations with the Communist Party or other subversive organizations. With Executive Order 10450, federal employees could be fired if they proved to be "security risks." The order states, in part, that "all persons privileged to be employed in the departments and agencies of the Government, shall be reliable, trustworthy, of good conduct and character, and of complete and unswerving loyalty to the United States."<sup>45</sup> It mandated immediate suspension without pay for people accused of disloyalty or being security risks, and, at first, left it to the discretion of each

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<sup>43</sup> Schrecker, "Labor and the Cold War," in Cherny, Issel, and Taylor, eds., *American Labor and the Cold War*, 11.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>45</sup> National Archives, "Executive Order 10450—Security Requirements for Government Employment," <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/10450.html>, accessed July 25, 2013.

department head in the federal government to determine how to comply with this order. But just a few months later a provision was added stating that employees would be fired for pleading the Fifth Amendment before a congressional committee.”<sup>46</sup>

Scholars of queer history have shed light on the ways in which homophobia was also an important, but not widely recognized, component of the Red Scare. Historian David K. Johnson reveals the impact of Executive Order 10450 on gay people employed by the federal government. By November of 1950, the federal government’s purge of queer employees had resulted in the dismissal of nearly six hundred people. Johnson writes, “in the State Department alone, security officials boasted that on average they were firing one homosexual per day, more than double the rate for those suspected of political disloyalty.”<sup>47</sup> Over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, approximately 1,000 people were dismissed from the State Department due to the suspicion that they were gay.<sup>48</sup> Whereas communists were labeled “loyalty risks,” gay people in the federal government were “security risks,” because they were supposedly weak and liable to be blackmailed into revealing information to enemies of the U.S. government.<sup>49</sup>

The federal government’s persecution of gay people during the Red Scare filtered down to state and local levels, as seen in Florida’s assault on gay teachers

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<sup>46</sup> Fariello, *Red Scare*, 40.

<sup>47</sup> David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

beginning in the late 1950s and through the mid-1960s. In 1956, Florida's Legislative Investigation Committee was established specifically to impede the NAACP's school desegregation efforts. The committee's attempt to link the NAACP with communism in order to prevent desegregation failed due to the organized opposition of civil rights activists. The committee then turned its sights on gay and lesbian teachers in 1959.<sup>50</sup> The persecution of gay and lesbian federal employees legitimated the harassment of gay and lesbian teachers. The investigation of gay and lesbian teachers ultimately resulted in the revocation of 98 teaching certificates between 1958 and 1964 on charges of "moral turpitude."<sup>51</sup>

The targeting of communist and gay and lesbian teachers during the Red Scare reveals the exceptional role that the teaching profession holds in the perpetuation of dominant world views. According to those in power, teachers were in a unique position to mold children. In the case of communist teachers, politicians feared that they would indoctrinate children in anti-American ideologies. In other words, communist teachers would teach children to challenge capitalism as an inherently exploitative economic system. Members of the Communist Party would also teach children to confront racism in American society. Gay and lesbian teachers, on the other hand, were in a position not only to teach children to challenge gender norms and thus gender inequality, but also to "recruit" children to homosexuality. These

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<sup>50</sup> Karen Graves, *And They Were Wonderful Teachers: Florida's Purge of Gay and Lesbian Teachers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), xi.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

factors led teachers to be particularly vulnerable to persecution during McCarthyism. As Karen Graves puts it, “to control teachers is to control the dominant ideology.”<sup>52</sup>

The Red Scare of the 1940s and 1950s was not only conducted at the federal level; state and local governments also played an active role in persecuting communists and other leftists. Thirty-nine states passed laws making it a crime to advocate the violent overthrow of the government, or to join organizations so advocating. At local, state, and federal levels more than three hundred laws had been passed by the mid-1950s making “subversive” activities illegal.<sup>53</sup> These laws varied in severity. According to Griffin Fariello, in Texas, for example, simply being a member of the Communist Party could result in a twenty-year prison sentence, while in Michigan “writing or speaking subversive words” could result in being sentenced to life imprisonment.<sup>54</sup>

During the 1940s, Jack B. Tenney, former leader of the musicians’ union, led California’s version of the Red Scare.<sup>55</sup> Tenney and anti-communist allies Sam Yorty and Hugh Burns were elected to the California Assembly in 1936 as New Deal Democrats, according to M.J. Heale, “when few local Democrats throughout the nation cared to be seen as anything other than New Dealers.”<sup>56</sup> Over the course of the 1930s, Tenney and his allies increasingly turned to the right politically as they sought

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., xvii.

<sup>53</sup> Fariello, *Red Scare*, 1995, 40.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>55</sup> M.J. Heale, “Red Scare Politics: California’s Campaign Against Un-American Activities, 1940-1970,” *Journal of American Studies* 20, no. 1 (April 1986): 14; Ingrid Winther Scobie, “Jack B. Tenney and the ‘Parasitic Menace’: Anti-Communist Legislation in California, 1940-1949,” *Pacific American Historical Review* 43, no. 2 (May 1974): 191.

<sup>56</sup> Heale, “Red Scare Politics,” 10–11.

to eradicate communist influence from various aspects of life in California. In 1941, Tenney was appointed to a newly established fact-finding committee on un-American activities in the California state legislature, which he would chair first as an assemblyman from 1941 to 1943, and then as a state senator from 1943 to 1949.<sup>57</sup> Hugh Burns, who served as vice-chair of the investigative committee throughout the 1940s, took over as chair upon Tenney's resignation in 1949.<sup>58</sup> In 1942, Tenney discontinued his membership in the Democratic Party and became a registered Republican, claiming that the Democratic Party had been "taken over lock, stock, and barrel by Sidney Hillman,<sup>59</sup> the C.I.O Political Action Committee and the Communist Party."<sup>60</sup> Before turning his attention in 1946 to rooting out subversives in education, Tenney targeted groups such as the Actors' Laboratory Theater, the Screen Writers Guild, the Congress of American Women, the Joint Anti-Fascist Committee, the Progressive Party, and the American Russian Institute.<sup>61</sup> Tenney's anti-communist crusade came to an end at the tail end of the 1940s when he turned his attention to colleagues in the Senate.<sup>62</sup> Only partially successful, Tenney's efforts would be expanded and intensified by others in the California legislature in the 1950s.

In the context of the global Cold War, within the borders of the United States proponents of the Red Scare, then, sought to root out the influence of communists and

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<sup>57</sup> Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 30.

<sup>58</sup> Heale, "Red Scare Politics," 14; Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 33.

<sup>59</sup> Sidney Hillman was a long-time leader of the Almagamated Clothing Workers of America and one of the founders of the Congress of Industrial Organizations in the 1930s.

<sup>60</sup> Heale, "Red Scare Politics," 16.

<sup>61</sup> Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 31.

<sup>62</sup> Scobie, "Jack B. Tenney and the 'Parasitic Menace,'" 191.

anybody guilty of “sympathetic associations” at federal, state and local levels. Additionally, while communists and other “subversives” were targeted on charges of “disloyalty,” gays and lesbians were subject to being investigated, fired, and blacklisted from their jobs as “security risks.” The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 fundamentally altered the labor movement as well, as the government sought to reduce the influence of leftists on unions and anti-communist labor leaders led their own witch hunt against communists within the union movement.

### **The Red Scare in Education**

The late 1940s and early 1950s were a period of ideological conflict in the nation’s schools. Across the country governments passed laws obliging teachers to take loyalty oaths denying any association with the Communist Party or other “subversive” organizations. Hundreds of public school teachers and college faculty lost their jobs, either by being directly fired or resigning out of fear of being accused of subversion. Teachers were targeted because, as noted before, they seemed to be in a unique position to influence children, in the case of the public school system, and young adults, in the case of the colleges and universities. According to anti-communists, teachers should promote Americanism in the classroom, a task for which communists and leftists were supposedly unsuited. The proponents of the blacklisting of communist teachers were not solely concerned with the impact of these teachers on the classroom, but also sought to weaken teacher unionism. In Los Angeles, teachers active in the left-led teachers’ union — AFT Local 430, which would become the

independent Los Angeles Federation of Teachers in 1948—were the main targets of the Red Scare in the schools. The blacklisting of teachers in Los Angeles happened in waves and was conducted at the federal, state, and local levels. The Los Angeles Board of Education cooperated with both state and federal investigation committees to identify, investigate, question, fire, and ultimately blacklist communist and other leftist teachers from being able to teach in the public school system in Los Angeles, and in California more generally.

Faculty at colleges and universities across the U.S. also found themselves obligated to swear their loyalty to the state and deny political affiliations linked with subversion. In California, as Schrecker shows, the University of California (UC) fully cooperated with these efforts. Beginning in 1942, faculty at the UC were obligated to profess their allegiance to the nation. This loyalty oath was just the beginning. With the escalation of the Red Scare in the spring of 1949, the UC governing board—the Regents—amended the 1942 loyalty oath. To be hired and preserve their positions, faculty now had to swear, “I am not a member of the Communist Party, or under any oath, or a party to any agreement, or under any commitment that is conflict with my obligations under this oath.”<sup>63</sup> This loyalty oath was unique because it specifically targeted employees at the UC, rather than public employees in general. The imposition of this oath resulted in the dismissal of approximately thirty professors for their refusal to sign the oath.<sup>64</sup> Legal challenges to the UC-specific loyalty resulted in the California Supreme Court decision in November, 1952, which determined that the

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<sup>63</sup> Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 116.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.



Levering Act superseded the UC loyalty oath. The decision also ordered the reinstatement of all non-signers.<sup>65</sup>

In September of 1950 the California legislature passed the Levering Act, which replaced the UC-specific loyalty oath, and applied to all public sector workers and civil defense employees. It required affected workers to declare their loyalty to the government and the US Constitution. It also stipulated that workers must declare that they did not advocate or belong to organizations that advocated the violent overthrow of either the federal government or the state of California, and that they did not belong to said organizations for the past five years and would not join one as long as they were employed by the government or in civil defense work.<sup>66</sup> Though the Levering Act included no specific mechanism for the firing of employees, the Los Angeles School Board used it nonetheless to investigate and suspend several teachers accused of subversion.<sup>67</sup>

Universities sought to decrease the influence of leftist dissent and radical intellectuals by targeting communist and other leftist faculty. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, organized left-wing movements became widespread, and for the first time this organizing thrived on college campuses. In the 1940s colleges were not immune to the mounting backlash against radicalism and liberalism, as college

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 122; Ellen Chase Verdries, "Teaching With the Enemy: An Archival and Narrative Analysis of McCarthyism in the Public Schools" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1996), 116.

<sup>67</sup> Verdries, "Teaching With the Enemy," 116.

administrations across the country collaborated in persecuting leftists.<sup>68</sup> In their targeting of the Communist Party, in particular, college administrators argued that membership in the party disqualified faculty from the privileges of academic life. Members of the Communist Party, it was argued, followed the Communist Party line and thus “surrendered” their “intellectual freedom.” A second reason for the exclusion of CP members from college faculties was the “the seemingly conspiratorial nature of the Communist Party,” according to Schrecker. “Though the secrecy which surrounded Party membership was but one aspect of that membership,” argues Schrecker, “the academic anti-Communists were to fix upon it and establish it as perhaps the most important disqualification of an academic Communist.”<sup>69</sup> This active discouragement of dissent on college campuses had as its consequence the weakening of organized leftist organizing on college campuses until the 1960s as well as the promotion of ideological uniformity and bias against Marxism and other forms of radical intellectual thought.<sup>70</sup>

The wave of teacher strikes in the years immediately following the end of World War II in 1945 contributed to persecution of communist and other leftist teachers. By the winter of 1947 teachers had struck in twelve states. The reasons for these strikes were in part economic. While the average wage of an industrial worker rose 80 percent between 1939 and 1946, the average teacher’s salary dropped 20

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<sup>68</sup> Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 24.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>70</sup> For more on the student movement of the 1930s, see Robert Cohen, *When the Old Left Was Young: Student Radicals and America’s First Mass Student Movement, 1929-1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

percent.<sup>71</sup> The AFT local in St. Paul, Minnesota led a five-week teacher strike in 1946, while teachers in San Francisco, Jersey City, and Chicago all won pay raises. Even the National Education Association, a professional organization for teachers and administrators which did not promote labor militancy or unionism, led a strike in Norwalk, Connecticut in 1946 in which the teachers refused to return to work until they were granted a pay raise and recognition. In Minneapolis, Minnesota striking teachers in 1948 were able to win an increase in their pay. Though strikes by other workers were widespread in the post-war period, these teacher strikes were particularly unusual given the history of the professionalization of teaching and the lack of collective bargaining rights for teachers. Additionally, the national policy of the American Federation Teachers, as was common for public sector unions at the time, had a policy against strikes, while the National Education Association did not define itself as a union until the 1960s. While the teacher strikes were atypical and many were at least partially successful in achieving their demands, there were also negative impacts. State legislatures began passing anti-strike laws for public employees. Boards of education, state legislatures, and the federal government directed their anti-communism toward public school teachers.<sup>72</sup>

The Red Scare affected teachers across the country. More than 60,000 teachers were investigated and approximately 500 teachers were either forced to resign or were fired. At the federal level, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) conducted its own investigations into subversion in the public

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<sup>71</sup> Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 182.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 183–184.

school system, most prominently under Harold Velde who chaired the committee in the mid-1950s. State governments and local school boards also produced their own committees to root out communists from the schools. In Detroit, in the early 1940s, HUAC publicized charges against ten teachers in the city's public schools and colleges.<sup>73</sup> In Pennsylvania in the fall of 1953 forty teachers were called before HUAC, and the Philadelphia Superintendent of Schools Louis B. Hoyer immediately suspended 30 teachers.<sup>74</sup>

The targeting of communist and other leftist teachers in New York City during the 1940s and 1950s was perhaps the most extensive blacklisting of teachers in the nation. It was not a coincidence that, alongside the teachers' union in Chicago, the teachers' union in New York City had one of the largest memberships compared to teachers' unions in other areas of the country.<sup>75</sup> The New York Teachers' Union, first as Local 5 of the AFT and then as Local 555 of the United Public Workers of America, was a left-led union with much of the leadership having had some affiliation with the Communist Party, either past or present. As early as 1940, the New York State Legislature established a special investigation committee, known as the Rapp-Coudert Committee, to expose communist teachers and professors.<sup>76</sup> But it was not until the late 1940s that the blacklisting of teachers became really successful. The New York City Board of Education launched a considerable campaign, in cooperation

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<sup>73</sup> Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 171.

<sup>74</sup> Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 193. Also see Harold Velde Committee Hearings (Un-American Activities Committee), 1954-1955 Collection, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>76</sup> Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 76.

with various civic groups, to both stamp out the left-led Teachers' Union and to dismiss communist and other leftist teachers. Taylor explains, "although the Teachers Union mounted a painstaking fight against the campaign, the prevailing Cold War atmosphere assured the success of its opponents. In the resulting purges close to four hundred TU members were fired, forced to resign, or compelled to retire."<sup>77</sup>

Additionally, the New York City Board of Education passed the Timone Resolution in 1950, barring the left-led Teachers Union from negotiating or filing grievances on behalf of teachers. The blacklisting of New York City teachers and the Timone Resolution, in conjunction with the purging of Local 5 from the AFT (and the simultaneous chartering of a competing teachers' union), served to destroy left-led teacher unionism in New York City in the 1950s.<sup>78</sup>

The blacklisting of teachers and college faculty in the 1940s and 1950s was a defining characteristic of the Red Scare. The attempted blacklisting began as early as the 1940, but really intensified and was much more successful in the late 1940s and the early to mid-1950s. While the international and domestic context of McCarthyism made the blacklisting possible, public school teachers and college professors were subject to the Red Scare for particular reasons. They were in a unique position to shape young minds; thus, proponents of anti-communism in education felt that communists and other leftists posed a unique threat to the reproduction of mainstream ideologies. The teachers targeted were, for the most part, either members of teachers' unions or elected leaders in left-led teacher unions. In 1955 the U.S. Senate Interim

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<sup>77</sup> Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*, 104.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 176–177.

Committee on Education remarked upon the success of blacklisting teachers, reporting that it was “deeply gratified” at the mass firing of teachers who refused to answer questions about their political affiliations.<sup>79</sup>

### **The Canoga Park Case: The Commencement of the Blacklist in Los Angeles**

Efforts to root out communist public school teachers in Los Angeles began in 1946 with the attempted blacklisting of two high school teachers at Canoga Park High School: Frances Eisenberg and Blanche Bettington. The Tenney Committee’s early efforts to root out communist influence in the schools were largely unsuccessful; the committee wanted to conduct a search for communist teachers throughout California’s public schools as well as change textbooks to eliminate any subject matter that could be interpreted as communist-oriented.<sup>80</sup> Though the attempt to fire Eisenberg and Bettington was ultimately unsuccessful, the state learned from its mistakes and would find more success in later efforts to blacklist teachers in Los Angeles in the early to mid-1950s.

The investigation of high school teachers Eisenberg and Bettington originated with the Tenney Committee’s efforts to investigate subversion in California’s schools in the early 1940s. Though an earlier investigation in 1941 disclosed no evidence of subversive teaching, Jack Tenney, along with his anti-communist colleague in the state legislature, Nelson Dilworth, refused to concede on the issue.<sup>81</sup> Aside from

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<sup>79</sup> Heale, “Red Scare Politics,” 26.

<sup>80</sup> Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 32.

<sup>81</sup> Verdries, “Teaching With the Enemy,” 66.

searching for communist teachers, the Tenney Committee also sought changes in school textbooks in order to eradicate any anti-American or subversive information. For example, one textbook was edited because of an “un-American” reference to the fact that “one-third of our people are poorly housed.”<sup>82</sup> The Tenney Committee, according to Heale, also “inveighed against...some sex education texts which were held to follow ‘the Communist Party line for the destruction of the moral fibre of American youth.’”<sup>83</sup>

Conservative parents in Canoga Park attracted the Tenney Committee’s attention to Eisenberg and Bettington at Canoga Park High School. Lyn Nofziger,<sup>84</sup> a student in Eisenberg’s journalism class, came from a conservative family concerned with any evidence of subversion at Canoga Park High School; it also wholeheartedly supported Tenney’s campaign against communists. According to Eisenberg, Nofziger, upset that Eisenberg and the rest of the journalism class refused to allow him to write a gossip column for the school newspaper, refused to complete school work for the final section of the class. When Eisenberg gave what she calls a “courtesy B” to him, on the last day of school Nofziger’s mother, Rosalind Nofziger, came to school to confront Eisenberg about what she felt was a low grade. Eisenberg recalled,

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<sup>82</sup> Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 32.

<sup>83</sup> Heale, “Red Scare Politics,” 18.

<sup>84</sup> Lyn Nofziger would go on to have a career in Republican Party politics, assisting Ronald Reagan in his campaigns for governor of California and for the United States presidency. Nofziger would also serve as President Reagan’s press secretary, before leaving to found a political consulting firm (Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 50.)

I remember that I had my door propped open because it was such a hot day. Then I heard a click, click, click of heels in the empty hallway. It stopped at the door. A voice said, 'Are you Mrs. Eisenberg?' I said, 'yes, come in.' 'I don't want to come in. I'm Lyn's mother. I have his report card in my hand. How dare you give my son a B? That's a disgrace in my family, you dirty Jew, I'll get even with you!'<sup>85</sup>

In an oral history, Eisenberg contends that conservative community members, including the Nofzigers, tipped off Tenney to "subversive" teaching at Canoga Park High School during Tenney's stop in Canoga Park as part of his campaign for the state Senate.<sup>86</sup>

The Tenney Committee questioned Eisenberg and Bettington at a hearing at Canoga Park High School in October, 1946 in an attempt to link the two teachers to the Communist Party and teaching un-American doctrines to their students. On October 2, 1946, the principal of Canoga Park High School called Eisenberg and Bettington out of their classrooms. At the principal's office the two found the county Sheriff, who served them with subpoenas to appear as witnesses before the Tenney Committee the following Wednesday.<sup>87</sup> He provided no information about the nature of the charges.<sup>88</sup> Tenney claimed that Eisenberg was associated with the Peoples' Educational Center, which the committee maintained was linked with the Communist Party. Eisenberg informed the Tenney Committee that she served as the delegate to

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<sup>85</sup> Fariello, *Red Scare*, 1995, 460.

<sup>86</sup> Fariello, *Red Scare*, 60.

<sup>87</sup> Frances Eisenberg, Draft narrative about experiences with the Tenney Committee, Frances R. Eisenberg Los Angeles City Schools Loyalty Oath Collection, ca. 1946-1958, folder 9, box 1.

<sup>88</sup> "Special Newsletter to all Members," October 14, 1946, Eisenberg Collection, folder 9, box 1.



the center on behalf of the Teachers' Union, AFT Local 430.<sup>89</sup> J. Paul Elliott, president of the Los Angeles Board of Education, appeared at the hearing and agreed that the Board would take charge of the investigation, stating that a public hearing would take place at Canoga Park High School on October 14-17, 1946.<sup>90</sup> The Board of Education charged Eisenberg and Bettington with teaching subversive doctrines to their students. An old student of Bettington's, a graduate of Canoga Park High School in 1941, accused Bettington of undermining the American government by comparing the United States to the Soviet Union and, in the process, of consistently defending the Soviet Union. Another student, the sister of a student of Bettington's who had never been in classes taught by either teacher, accused both Eisenberg and Bettington of using communist newspapers in their teaching.<sup>91</sup>

Bettington and Eisenberg had taught for many years before they were called before the Tenney Committee. Eisenberg had been teaching at Canoga Park High School for ten years, while Bettington had been a teacher for 23 years. Eisenberg taught Senior Problems and Journalism courses at the school, while Bettington was the head of the Social Studies Department. Bettington also was the "Lieutenant Governor" of the State Federation of World Friendship Clubs and adviser to the

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<sup>89</sup> Frances Eisenberg, Draft narrative about experiences with the Tenney Committee, Eisenberg Collection, folder 9, box 1.

<sup>90</sup> Citizens Committee for Better Education, "The Canoga Park Investigation," Eisenberg Collection, folder 9, box 1.

<sup>91</sup> Frances Eisenberg, Draft narrative about experiences with the Tenney Committee, Eisenberg Collection, folder 9, box 1.

student body government.<sup>92</sup> Eisenberg helped her students win twelve consecutive national journalism awards for one of the best student newspapers in the country.<sup>93</sup>

An important factor that helps to explain why Eisenberg and Bettington were subject to an investigation stemmed from conservative influences on Canoga Park High School. Located in the San Fernando Valley just outside the city of Los Angeles, in the 1940s Canoga Park was rural and agricultural, and included, remembers Eisenberg, many Mexican immigrant workers, as well as southern white people who had come to California looking for an improved standard of living.<sup>94</sup> Another teacher at Canoga Park High School who would face the blacklist just a few years later, Jean Wilkinson, remembers that the elementary schools were segregated between white children and Mexican children until they came to high school, and that there were “strong feelings against migratory workers, agricultural workers of all kinds. The Associated Farmers, a conservative grower group in the area, also had a strong presence and significant political influence in the area.”<sup>95</sup>

It was clear that the Tenney Committee targeted Eisenberg due to her activism in AFT Local 430. Eisenberg was a very active union member with the Teachers’ Union, American Federation of Teachers, Local 430. Not only was she the editor of the union’s newsletter for many years, but Eisenberg remembered that she was the

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<sup>92</sup> “Special Newsletter to all Members,” October 14, 1946, Eisenberg Collection, folder 9, box 1.

<sup>93</sup> Greg Goldin, Term Papers, 8, Goldin Collection, folder 2, box 1.

<sup>94</sup> Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 46.

<sup>95</sup> Jean Wilkinson, Interview in Verdries, “Teaching With the Enemy,” 208–209. Verdries’ dissertation contains long segments of interviews she conducted with blacklisted teachers. She often referred to the teachers using just first or last names or, possibly, pseudonyms

first union member at Canoga Park High School when she started teaching there in 1936, and that by the time she left in 1949 to teach at Fairfax High School “almost every teacher in the Social Studies department and the English department,” as well as some of the language teachers and teachers in other departments, had become union members.<sup>96</sup> Additionally, for the five years prior to Tenney’s investigation Eisenberg had been an officer of the AFT Local 430.<sup>97</sup> Though this was not public, Eisenberg had also joined the Communist Party in 1936.

It is less clear why Bettington was the target of an investigation. She had worked at Canoga Park for 23 without suspicion and, according to Eisenberg, Bettington “fundamentally would never, never be a member of the Communist Party.”<sup>98</sup>

Overall, then, active engagement of some conservative parents and community members with the work of the Tenney Committee, in conjunction with Eisenberg’s activism with the Local 430, contributed to the choice that the Tenney Committee made to make Eisenberg and Bettington the very first teachers targeted during the Red Scare in education in the 1940s.

Community members, alumni, current students at Canoga Park High School, members of the Los Angeles labor movement, and AFT Local 430 all came to the defense of Eisenberg and Bettington in 1946. AFT Local 430 established a Teachers

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<sup>96</sup> Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 16; Frances Eisenberg, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, tape 1, box 2.

<sup>97</sup> Francis Eisenberg to “Friends,” November, 1946, Eisenberg Collection, folder 9, box 1.

<sup>98</sup> Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 18; Francis Eisenberg, Interview in Verdries, “Teaching With the Enemy,” 194.

Defense Fund, which solicited contributions from community members interested “in defense of academic freedom and the public schools.”<sup>99</sup> The union also conducted political education about the case in order to increase support for the teachers, with Harold Orr, the president of Local 430, speaking before the Board of Education on October 14, 1946 and the union issuing statements and soliciting “financial and moral support” from the national office of the American Federation of Teachers.<sup>100</sup>

The national office of the American Federation of Teachers supported Eisenberg and Bettington, while at the same time condemning advocates of communism. An AFT statement issued on November 30, 1946 noted that the national union “has been deeply interested in opposing classroom teaching which is contrary to the fundamental principles of American democracy.” After noting that the AFT constitution prohibited union membership to members of the Communist Party, the AFT statement referred to the “unsubstantiated” charges against the two teachers, arguing that the investigation itself—rather than the two teachers—was a “subversive and un-American practice of the worst kind.”<sup>101</sup>

In contrast to the AFT statement, the CIO-affiliated and left-led United Public Workers of America issued a statement on November 19, 1946 in support of Eisenberg and Bettington, finding no need to indicate its opposition to communism.

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<sup>99</sup> “Special Newsletter to all Members,” October 14, 1946, Eisenberg Collection, folder 9, box 1.

<sup>100</sup> “Statement of President Orr to Board of Education, October 14, 1946,” Eisenberg Collection, folder 10, box 1; “Special Newsletter to all Members,” October 14, 1946, Eisenberg Collection, folder 9, box 1.

<sup>101</sup> American Federation of Teachers to “Dear Sir,” November 30, 1946, Eisenberg Collection, folder 2, box 1.

Rather, Harry Jung, the UPWA's regional representative, asserted that not only were the two teachers "preaching no doctrine" but they were "building better citizens by guiding their students to independent thinking and training them to investigate impartially all doctrines and opinions and to reach their own conclusions in a truly American and democratic spirit." In the statement Jung recommended "complete vindication" of the teachers, a "disavowal of the charges made before the Tenney Committee," and called for the Board to issue a statement "specifically forbidding interference with the right of teachers to present every side of any moot question."<sup>102</sup> The difference in how the AFT and the UPWA expressed their support perhaps stemmed from the AFT's anti-communist campaign, beginning in the early 1940s, to remove communists from its ranks, while the CIO, the parent union of the UPWA, would, just a couple of years later, kick the UPWA out on charges of communism. UPWA, like Local 430, was a left-led union.<sup>103</sup>

The organized support of students, parents, alumni, and other community members may have helped to delegitimize the Tenney Committee's investigation into Eisenberg and Bettington's teaching. Eisenberg remembers that "so great was the indignation" at the hearings that a "West Valley Fair Action Committee of parents and concerned citizens was organized in two days." About 150 people "descended upon the Board of Education demanding an immediate and fair investigation." During the October, 1946 hearing at the High School, Eisenberg remembers that over 100

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<sup>102</sup> Harry S. Jung, Regional Representative of United Public Workers of America to Mr. Verling Kersey, Superintendent of Schools, Board of Education, Los Angeles, November 19, 1946, Eisenberg Collection, folder 2, box 1.

<sup>103</sup> Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*, 171.

people testified, mostly in favor of the teachers.<sup>104</sup> In October, teachers at John Marshall High School signed a petition in support of the teachers, while the Southland Jewish Organization sent a letter signed by 48 people expressing their “full support” in the fight against the “unjust accusations.”<sup>105</sup> Students and parents also “bombarded” the Board of Education with supportive letters throughout October.<sup>106</sup> “Mrs C.,” a science teacher retired from Canoga Park High School who had also been a member of the Communist Party (but always hid this fact), organized alumni support in the leadup to the October hearings. “We had this throng of alumni supporting us,” stresses Eisenberg.<sup>107</sup> The support both teachers received surpassed the ability of the anti-communists to drum up support for dismissing the two teachers, indicating perhaps that the atmosphere of rabid anti-communism present in the early to mid-1950s had not quite grown to a large enough extent in 1946 to really kick start a widespread witch hunt in the Los Angeles schools.

As a result of the hearing at Canoga Park High School on October 15-18, 1946, the Los Angeles Board of Education decided in December, 1946 that no disciplinary measures would be taken against either Eisenberg or Bettington. The board found that neither teacher “imposed Communistic doctrines upon students in their classes, or that they ‘slanted’ or improperly influenced the policy or articles of

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<sup>104</sup> Frances Eisenberg, Draft narrative about experiences with the Tenney Committee, Eisenberg Collection, folder 9, box 1.

<sup>105</sup> Petition signed by faculty at John Marshall High School in support of Eisenberg and Bettington; Members of the Southland Jewish Organization to Mrs. Eisenberg, October 19, 1946, Eisenberg Collection, folder 1, box 1.

<sup>106</sup> Frances Eisenberg, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, tape 2, box 2.

<sup>107</sup> Frances Eisenberg, Interview in Verdries, “Teaching With the Enemy,” 212.

the school newspaper, 'The Hunter's Call.' The Board's report indicates that both teachers "denied sympathy with or approval of Communism" and that they "asserted approval of" "our capitalistic system of free enterprise." However, the board did assert that both teachers used practices "which could reasonably be expected improperly to influence or slant the thinking" of some students. The report also stated that both teachers "actively and conspicuously have taken partisan positions in the community on highly controversial, political, economic, or social issues." While Eisenberg and Bettington had expressed their opinions in the classroom, however, the board of education found that the two teachers "granted the students the right to differ, to express their own opinions, and to read source material of every nature." The board concluded that Bettington and Eisenberg had not intentionally sought to indoctrinate their students. Thus, though the Board had some questions with regard to their teaching, it did not recommend disciplinary action.<sup>108</sup>

Happy that they did not face disciplinary charges, the two teachers issued a statement indicating that they were nonetheless dissatisfied that they were not completely cleared of all charges. Their reply declared that the Board's findings, "denies the rights of teachers as citizens to participate in community."<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, the Tenney Committee called the Board's investigation a "complete whitewash," asserting, in contrast,

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<sup>108</sup> "Report from the Committee of the Whole and Superintendent to the Board of Education," Subject: "Review of Evidence and Findings in the Canoga Park Inquiry," December 30, 1946, Eisenberg Collection, folder 4, box 1.

<sup>109</sup> "Analysis of Board's Review by Mrs. B and Mrs. E," Eisenberg Collection, folder 4, box 1.

This committee finds that Mrs. Eisenberg and Mrs. Bettington slanted their teachings and discussions at the Canoga Park High School for the purpose of indoctrinating its students with Communist philosophy, disrespect for the capitalist system of the government of the United States and for the further purpose of building respect and reverence for the cruel dictatorship of the Soviet Union.<sup>110</sup>

Without the cooperation of the Los Angeles School Board, however, the teachers could not face disciplinary action.

The Tenney Committee, by 1946, had years of experience making exaggerated claims about communist influence in California. It would take the Los Angeles Board of Education a few more years before it, like the Tenney Committee, would fully partake in the anti-communist hysteria that resulted in the blacklisting of “subversive “ teachers. This investigation of Eisenberg and Bettington marked just the beginning of the Red Scare in education in California. It reveals, first, that in 1946 anti-communism in California had not become sufficiently hysterical to make the firing of leftist teachers a widely accepted practice. Secondly, it demonstrates, through the targeting of teacher union activist Eisenberg, the anti-union nature of the persecution of communist and other leftist teachers.

### **Anti-Communism and American Federation of Teachers Local 430**

The history of teacher unionism in Los Angeles is fundamentally linked with the history of the Communist Party and anti-communism in Los Angeles. Prior to being purged from the American Federation of Teachers in 1948, AFT Local 430 was a left-led union that promoted what labor historians refer to as social unionism. In

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<sup>110</sup> Cited in Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 60.



contrast to advocates of business unionism, a philosophy toward unionism narrower in its political scope, advocates of social unionism had an expansive vision of social and economic justice.<sup>111</sup> AFT Local 430's version of social unionism most clearly revealed itself in the union's organizing for racial justice and its organizing alongside community-based groups. The Communist Party membership of many of the elected leaders of Local 430 shaped the union's politics, but because of the anti-communism of the AFT's national office Local 430's link with the CP also contributed to the union's downfall. When members dissatisfied with the leadership of Local 430 unsuccessfully attempted to unseat the leadership in a union election, they turned to the national office of the American Federation of Teachers to investigate Local 430 on charges of communism.

The history of the American Federation of Teachers in Los Angeles began, according to Roger Lynn Clancy, in 1919 with the founding of AFT Local 77. However, Local 77 was short-lived and unsuccessful in achieving its aims or recruiting many members. After Local 77 expired in 1923, the AFT would not charter another union local in Los Angeles until 1935, when several teachers successfully established AFT Local 430.<sup>112</sup> Though many teachers belonged to well-established professional associations in Los Angeles, and were leery of joining a teachers' union, AFT Local 430 experienced slow but steady growth over its lifetime. From a membership of 22 teachers in 1936, by the time it was purged from the American

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<sup>111</sup> Kim Moody, *An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism* (London; New York: Verso, 1988), xv.

<sup>112</sup> Lynn Roger Clancy, Jr., "The History of the American Federation of Teachers in Los Angeles, 1919-1969" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1971), 1.

Federation of Teachers in 1948 Local 430 had 736 members.<sup>113</sup> This was not a particularly impressive number, however. The Los Angeles School District, after all, had approximately 10,500 teachers in the late 1940s, meaning at its height Local 430's membership comprised less than one percent of the total number of teachers in Los Angeles. However, in the 1940s public school teachers did not have the legal right to collective bargaining, decreasing the potential influence the union could have on the working conditions and compensation of teachers in Los Angeles. AFT Local 430, like teachers' unions elsewhere, tended to have lower membership in the absence of collective bargaining rights.<sup>114</sup>

AFT Local 430 and its predecessor, the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers, organized around a multiplicity of issues relating to teachers' working conditions and compensation, including, for example, salary increases for teachers. In 1948 the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers recommended to the Los Angeles School Board an across-the-board raise of \$42 a month, a minimum annual salary of \$3,100 and a maximum annual salary of \$6,000.<sup>115</sup> In order to convince the Board of Education of the necessity for the salary increase the union gathered 10,000 taxpayer signatures in just three weeks to combat the notion that people would refuse to vote in favor of a

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>114</sup> "AFT Convention Proceedings, 1948, Abridged," AFT Collection, part II, series VIII, folder 1, box 23.

<sup>115</sup> "Teachers Ask Pay Rise Top Budget Allotment," June 8, 1948, *Los Angeles Times*; "AFT Convention Proceedings, Abridged, 1948," AFT Collection, part II, series VIII, folder 1, box 23.

tax to increase school funding, and teachers salaries in particular.<sup>116</sup> Another major campaign in the early 1950s was to decrease class size as well as a reduction in teachers' workloads. The union directed its demand for smaller classes to the state legislature.<sup>117</sup> In the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s the union also organized in support of academic freedom, advocated for the rights of substitute teachers, demanded improved instructional facilities, called for a free lunch hour, carried teachers' grievances to the school board, and advocated for the protection of teacher tenure rights, among other issues.<sup>118</sup>

Local 430 was also committed to anti-racism, in large part because many of the union's leaders were members of the Communist Party, USA (CP). The CP, beginning in the late 1920s, followed the Soviet Union's line which defined African Americans in the United States as an oppressed nation with a right to self-determination. Mark Naison writes that this new line, adopted in 1928, "endowed the black struggle with unprecedented dignity and importance." The CP defined black people in the South, in particular, as a "revolutionary force," making it necessary for the U.S.-based CP to prioritize organizing among African Americans in the South, particularly to organize the rural black population for control of the land, against Jim

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<sup>116</sup> "AFT Convention Proceedings, Abridged, 1948," AFT Collection, part II, series VIII folder 1, box 23.

<sup>117</sup> *The Los Angeles Teacher* XI, no. 5, February 1951, L.A. Teachers Union Collection, folder 3, box 2.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.; Charles E. Ham, "Union Carries Fight For Substitutes to Higher Court," *The Los Angeles Teacher* 6, no. 6, September-October 1945, AFT Defunct Locals Collection, folder: #430 L.A. Federation of Teachers, box 10.

Crow segregation, and lynching.<sup>119</sup> Across the U.S. the CP organized not only to stamp out any anti-black racism among white Party members, but actively engage in the black freedom.<sup>120</sup> In 1935 the Communist Party abandoned what it called “self-determination in the Black Belt” as part of its organizing program in favor of a Popular Front, a political line it held until 1945. This new organizing program promoted alliances with liberals, socialists, established trade unions, and others in order to fight world fascism.<sup>121</sup> The CP did, however, continue to organize against racism, focusing on such issues as voting rights, employment discrimination and the denial of civil rights.<sup>122</sup>

More concretely, the Communist Party’s anti-racist organizing in Los Angeles and elsewhere helped to attract African Americans and other people of color to the

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<sup>119</sup> Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 18.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 173. For histories of the Communist Party in the United States, particularly the CP and race, see Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Harry Haywood and Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *A Black Communist in the Freedom Struggle: The Life of Harry Haywood* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Dorothy Healey and Maurice Isserman, *Dorothy Healey Remembers a Life in the American Communist Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Gerald Horne, *Black Liberation/Red Scare: Ben Davis and the Communist Party* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993); Hosea Hudson and Nell Irvin Painter, *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson: The Life and Times of a Black Radical* (New York: Norton, 1994); Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?: The American Communist Party During the Second World War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*; Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*; Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression*; Fraser M Ottanelli, *The Communist Party of the United States: From the Depression to World War II* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991); Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women’s Liberation* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948-1968* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2004).

party. Most prominently, the International Labor Defense (ILD), an organization established by the CP, worked vigorously in behalf of the so-called “Scottsboro boys.” The case involved nine African American teenagers accused of raping a white woman in Alabama in 1931, with all but the one thirteen-year-old being sentenced to death in a rushed trial with poor defense counsel and an all-white jury. The Communist Party came to their defense, not only legally through the ILD but also via an enormous political defense campaign. The CP’s work on the Scottsboro case attracted the involvement and participation of many African Americans, in particular.<sup>123</sup>

Though the CP’s organizing paid disproportionate attention to black struggles for equality, the party in Los Angeles also organized against discrimination faced by people of Mexican and Latin American origin and Asian Americans. A well-known leader in the Los Angeles CP, Dorothy Healey remembered, “the fight against

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<sup>123</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 32; *Bridges of Reform: Interracial Civil Rights Activism in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 41. For more on the Scottsboro case and the International Labor Defense, see James R. Acker, *Scottsboro and Its Legacy: The Cases That Challenged American Legal and Social Justice* (Westport: Praeger, 2008); Erin Royston Battat, *Ain’t Got No Home: America’s Great Migrations and the Making of an Interracial Left* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Dan T. Carter, *Scottsboro: A Tragedy of the American South*, rev. ed (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979); Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York; London: W. W. Norton, 2009); James E. Goodman, *Stories of Scottsboro* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994); Haywood and Midlo Hall, *A Black Communist in the Freedom Struggle*; Horne, *Black Liberation/Red Scare*; Gerald Horne, *Black Revolutionary: William Patterson and the Globalization of the African American Freedom Struggle* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013); Walter T. Howard, ed., *Black Communists Speak on Scottsboro: A Documentary History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007); Hosea Hudson and Nell Irvin Painter, *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson*; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*; Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); James A. Miller, *Remembering Scottsboro: The Legacy of an Infamous Trial* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

racism...was the central question as far as we were concerned. There was nothing that had a higher priority.”<sup>124</sup> Before the Red Scare crippled the work of the party, in Los Angeles the CP was one of the main vehicles for civil rights activism, especially in years immediately following WWII. Only second in size nationally to the CP in New York, the Los Angeles Communist Party was known for organizing direct action protests against police brutality and against discrimination in employment and housing. The party also prioritized political education.<sup>125</sup> The Communist Party organized demonstrations in support of striking Mexican Imperial Valley farm workers. According to Shana Bernstein, it also demonstrated against anti-alien fishing laws, a particular concern of the Japanese community.<sup>126</sup> The Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee, a multiracial alliance formed to defend seventeen Mexican-American teenage boys incarcerated on murder charges in 1943, included a crosssection of people with a variety of politics, including people affiliated with the Communist Party and the CP-associated International Labor Defense.<sup>127</sup> Sides argues that the African American community’s collaboration with the Communist Party strengthened in the late 1940s and early 1950s, prompted by the organizing of the CP-affiliated

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<sup>124</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 141–142.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 142–143.

<sup>126</sup> Bernstein, *Bridges of Reform*, 41.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 65, 87–88; For more on the Sleepy Lagoon case and the Zoot Suit Riots, see Luis Alvarez, *The Power of the Zoot: Youth Culture and Resistance During World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Kevin Allen Leonard, *The Battle for Los Angeles: Racial Ideology and World War II* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006); Eduardo Obregón Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zootsuits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Catherine Sue Ramírez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Mark A. Weitz, *The Sleepy Lagoon Murder Case: Race Discrimination and Mexican-American Rights* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010).

Civil Rights Congress in response to the police murder of African American Herman Burns in 1948.<sup>128</sup>

Though the CP in Los Angeles was actively engaged in anti-racist organizing, it never quite managed to become a truly multiracial alliance, according to Bernstein. By the late 1940s, Jewish and white people still predominated as CP members and leaders in Los Angeles, though African American membership had increased by then, making up about ten percent of the local membership, while there were about 300 to 400 Mexican American members. The exact number of Japanese American CP members was hard to come by, but, as Bernstein explains, CP member Karl Yoneda's memoir makes clear that Japanese Americans joined the Communist Party earlier in the twentieth-century and remained members through the 1940s. Total Party membership in Los Angeles reached a high point in 1949, with 5,000 members.<sup>129</sup>

One way that AFT Local 430 incorporated anti-racism into its organizing was through its efforts to incorporate the histories of people of color—particularly African American history—into the school curricula. A blacklisted teacher and union activist, who Verdries only refers to as “Muriel,” recalled that she joined a union subcommittee that prepared materials on black history and “put it into the schools.”<sup>130</sup> Another teacher and union activist, Arlene Shepro, remembered that she was teaching at a school in the San Fernando Valley with approximately one-quarter Mexican-

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<sup>128</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 140.

<sup>129</sup> Bernstein, *Bridges of Reform*, 113. Bernstein writes that Los Angeles had the highest proportion of Japanese American Party members, numbering about 60 to 100, “according to one estimate” (Bernstein, 42).

<sup>130</sup> Quoted in Verdries, “Teaching With the Enemy,” 196.

American students. Shepro made sure to teach her fourth grade students about the contributions of Mexicans during her unit about early California history.<sup>131</sup> During World War II, Local 430 went before the Los Angeles School Board to advocate for the inclusion of multiracial subjects into the school system's curricula. Local 430 linked its rationale for diversifying the curricula to the U.S. involvement in the war, arguing that "addressing race relations in the schools would help counter Fifth Column agents' attempts to propagate 'anti-Mexicanism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Negroism.'"<sup>132</sup>

Abraham Minkus, Vice President of Local 430, paid a particularly prominent role in Local 430's anti-racist organizing by promoting intercultural education in the Los Angeles school system during the mid-1940s.<sup>133</sup> Intercultural education, as a precursor to multicultural education, stressed the contributions of people of various ethnicities and races to the culture and history of the U.S. Rachel Davis DuBois, a Quaker born in 1892, was prominent promoter of intercultural education. According to Taylor, DuBois' programs "went beyond tolerance, wanting instead to develop 'sympathetic attitudes toward various races and nations.'"<sup>134</sup> Local 430, as well as the New York Teachers Union, advocated intercultural education as a way to combat discrimination in the schools. Taylor writes of the New York Teachers' Union's support of intercultural education: "this civil rights effort was just as important as the

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<sup>131</sup> Arlene Shepro, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, tape 1, box 2.

<sup>132</sup> Bernstein, *Bridges of Reform*, 87.

<sup>133</sup> "Abe and Libbie," Interview in Verdries, "Teaching With the Enemy," 187.

<sup>134</sup> Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*, 88–90.



right to vote because it attempted to put an end to the systematic psychological destruction of children.”<sup>135</sup>

Minkus and Local 430 prioritized intercultural education, viewing a more racially and ethnically inclusive school curriculum as a key component to the larger civil rights struggle. Minkus and the union influenced the Los Angeles Board of Education to set up a Committee on Intercultural Education. Beginning in 1943 or 1944, Local 430 initiated the fight for intercultural education when it helped to enlist the support of 86 organizations to go before the Board of Education to advocate for intercultural education. As a result of this mobilization at the Board’s meeting, the Superintendent issued a directive in 1945 to “all principals, directives, and supervisors” on “Principles, Policies, and Procedures for the Development of Tolerance within the Student Body.”<sup>136</sup> In the mid-1940s Minkus served on a Committee on Intercultural Education, alongside Carey McWilliams, a journalist, author and activist focused heavily on labor and anti-racism, and Revels Cayton, Vice President of the California CIO Council and civil rights activist. Of his participation on the committee, Minkus recalled in an interview in the late 1970s, “the orientation was that, here, we have children of all kinds of different ethnic backgrounds,” that education was too “one-sided:

there isn’t enough understanding of blacks...of Chicanos, and yet they are an immediate and important part of our community. To go by the

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>136</sup> Harold Orr, “President Reviews Accomplishments of Teachers’ Union”; Abraham Minkus, “The Huge Demonstration for Racial Equality Points to an Intercultural Education Need,” *The Los Angeles Teacher* 6, no. 6, Oct.-Sept. 1945, both citations from AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: #430 LA fed of teachers, box 10.

curriculum in effect at that time, one would never dream that there were blacks in the American population or that Chicanos had a great deal to do with the development of this part of our country.<sup>137</sup>

Though Local 430 did address the need to incorporate the histories of various people of color, the union focused much more on African American history, particularly in the pages of its newsletter. Like the left-led Teachers Union in New York City, Local 430 advocated for the inclusion of “Negro History Week” in the curriculum. Historian Carter G. Woodson, the director of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, established “Negro History Week” in 1926 as the second week of February. Taylor explains that Woodson promoted black history because it “would be used to oppose the myths of black inferiority propagated by white America. Negro history could also help bolster black esteem, which was constantly under attack by the dissemination of racist lies.”<sup>138</sup> After years of promoting black history, Local 430 wrote in its 1951 newsletter that the schools in Los Angeles had adopted Negro History Week. The newsletter read, “Crispus Attucks, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, George W. Carver and others need to be known and remembered as American heroes along with other heroes and patriots commonly studied.”<sup>139</sup> During its February, 1953 membership meeting, Local 430 held an event to mark Negro History Week, which was “always the principal event of

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<sup>137</sup> Abraham and Libbie Minkus, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, tape 2, box 2. For information on Revels Cayton, see Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 51, 63.

<sup>138</sup> Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*, 251.

<sup>139</sup> “Observe Negro History,” *The Los Angeles Teacher* XI, no. 5, February 1951, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

the February membership meeting,” according to the union’s newsletter.<sup>140</sup> During the February, 1954 membership meeting the president of the Los Angeles NAACP, Dr. Claude Hudson, gave a speech, asserting that Negro History Week was necessary because African American history had been purposely deleted from the teaching of American history.<sup>141</sup>

In addition to its work promoting black history and intercultural education, AFT Local 430 challenged racial discrimination in the Los Angeles School system in a multiplicity of ways. For example, in 1948, Local 430 brought charges against an elementary school principal, Nell Haas, for being anti-Semitic, anti-union and for showing “contempt toward professional Negro people” to the School Board. Though the School Board ultimately dismissed most of these charges, this demonstrates the union’s commitment to challenging discrimination.<sup>142</sup> The union also organized to demand the hiring of more African American teachers in Los Angeles Schools in the 1940s and 1950s. Florence Sloat, a union activist who helped to found Local 430, contends that when the union was first formed in 1936 “there were no black teachers hired.”<sup>143</sup> Eisenberg recalls that the union actively worked to recruit black teachers, remarking that the union’s committee to hire more black teachers was labeled

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<sup>140</sup> “An Outstanding Negro History Week Presentation,” *The Los Angeles Teacher* XIII, no. 2, January 1953, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

<sup>141</sup> *The Los Angeles Teacher* 14, no. 10, April 1954, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

<sup>142</sup> “The HAAS Case: Principal of the 28<sup>th</sup> St. School,” *The Los Angeles Teacher* IX, no. 2, October 1948, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

<sup>143</sup> Florence Muriel Sloat, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, tape 1, box 2.

communist.<sup>144</sup> Another union activist, “Margaret,” recalled that the union knew that there were no black teachers hired at all-white schools, saying that it was “an unwritten policy.” Since the data did not exist, at some point in the mid- to late-1940s Local 430 sent a survey to a “cross section” of 200 teachers to prove the existence of de facto segregation in order to influence the Board of Education’s hiring policy, which is exactly what their survey found. Though the Board of Education immediately rejected their findings, a teacher involved in AFT Local 430, referred to as “Margaret” by Verdries, recalled, “the next year, low and behold, there were the first few Negro teachers at White schools. It had an impact.”<sup>145</sup>

The Los Angeles School Board’s banning of materials related to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) from Los Angeles schools provides an important example of Local 430’s engagement with larger social issues. Information about UNESCO was a part of the curriculum in the Los Angeles public school system from 1946 to 1951. In September, 1950 the Board of Education adopted a teachers’ manual entitled “The ‘E’ in UNESCO,” “a sincere attempt to interpret through the ‘E’ (Education) all areas of UNESCO, to emphasize similarities rather than differences, to help people to improve human relations, and to help students understand and assume their responsibilities,” according to “Margaret.”<sup>146</sup> UNESCO was established in 1945 in the aftermath of World War II. Its constitution describes its purpose: “to contribute to peace and security by

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<sup>144</sup> Frances Eisenberg, Interview in Verdries, “Teaching With the Enemy,” 182.

<sup>145</sup> “Margaret,” Interview in Ibid., 188.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 181–182.

promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture.” The purpose of UNESCO was, in part, to foster an understanding of the diversity and integrity of world cultures.<sup>147</sup> But in the midst of the Cold War, in the fall of 1951 rightwing organizations and other anti-communists protested the existence of the UNESCO program in Los Angeles schools, claiming the program was unpatriotic because it promoted a “one-world ideology” and it provided students with “daily doses of Communism, Socialism, New Dealism and other isms,” according to *The Los Angeles Teacher*.<sup>148</sup> As a result, on January 10, 1953 the Board of Education conceded to anti-communist demands and abolished the teaching of UNESCO. The Los Angeles Federation of Teachers (by now expelled from the AFT) repeatedly protested this ban of the UNESCO curriculum, linking the banning of UNESCO to the Red Scare and demanding a “revitalized” UNESCO program as late as 1956.<sup>149</sup>

From its founding in 1935, AFT Local 430 advocated a vision of unionism that combined organizing in behalf of teachers on the job with a devotion to broader struggles for social justice. The membership of some of the key leaders of Local 430 in the Communist Party influenced the Local’s organizing against racism, particularly the union’s campaign promoting the incorporation of black history and intercultural education into the curriculum of public schools in Los Angeles.

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<sup>147</sup> Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association, “The United Nations, UNESCO, and American Schools” (Washington, DC: 1952).

<sup>148</sup> Verdries, “Teaching With the Enemy,” 82, 87.

<sup>149</sup> *The Los Angeles Teacher*, nos. 1, 3, September 1952; *The Los Angeles Teacher* XIII, no. 2, January 1953, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2; “The Federation’s Program for 1955-1956,” *The Los Angeles Teacher* XVIII, no. 1, October 1955, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

## **The Expulsion of Local 430 from the American Federation of Teachers**

As we have seen, virulent anti-communism infected both the labor movement and education. Within the American Federation of Teachers, anti-communists had been attempting to purge the union of communists and other leftists since the 1930s, when leftists were able to gain some power within the union. After more conservative unionists successfully defeated communists and other leftists in the AFT elections for the presidency in 1939 and the AFT executive council in 1940, the opportunity finally arose for the anti-communist AFT leadership to expel left-led AFT locals. In 1941 the purges began with the revocation of Local 5's charter, the Teachers Union in New York City, and culminated with the expulsion of AFT Local 430, the left-led teachers' union in Los Angeles in 1948. The expulsion of Local 430 facilitated a political transformation of the union, both in Los Angeles and nationally, from a union especially engaged in anti-racist struggles to a relatively politically moderate union focused more on the bread and butter issues of teachers. The political infighting over communism within the AFT had the immediate impact of reducing the number of AFT members. It also diverted the union's energies away from growing its membership and unionization, perhaps resulting in the further postponement of the unionization of teachers.

The newly galvanized labor movement and the growth of the Communist Party during the Great Depression of the 1930s stimulated growth in membership in the AFT as well as its shift to the left politically. In 1934 there were 7,500 members

in the AFT, but more than 40,000 AFT members just six years later.<sup>150</sup> During the 1930s, moreover, the Communist Party and other leftists gained power within the AFT, as political conflict beset the union. By 1936, the CP and allies had gained ten of fifteen seats on the Executive Council as well as the presidency, when CP fellow traveler Jerome Davis was elected AFT president.<sup>151</sup> According to Murphy, the CP at first viewed students as the primary target for organizing, but with a rapid influx of members into the CP, in conjunction with the rapid growth in AFT membership, the CP's orientation toward the AFT changed. By the mid-1930s the Communist Party "began to view the teachers' union as an important aspect of its program." The younger generation of radical activists that became active in the AFT in the 1930s, according to Murphy, were less concerned than older union leaders with teacher professionalism, instead focusing more on the availability of jobs and teacher salaries.<sup>152</sup> The CP, moreover, was attracted to the AFT because of its reputation as a "gadfly" union as well as its history of paying some attention to social justice. When the CP and allies came to power within the AFT they would concentrate the union's energies even more on larger political issues as well as building alliances with community groups to promote social justice, particularly civil rights struggles.<sup>153</sup>

The CP's Popular Front line in 1935 meant that the party became involved in less radical unions, like the AFL-affiliated American Federation of Teachers, while at

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<sup>150</sup> Timothy Reese Cain, "Unionised Faculty and the Political Left: Communism and the American Federation of Teachers on the Eve of the Second World War," *History of Education* 41, no. 4 (June 2012): 520.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 525–526.

<sup>152</sup> Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 155.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

the same time maintaining a strong presence in the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). The CP's penchant for involvement in and support for the CIO meant that the CP influenced the AFT to actively support the CIO, a stance that was not popular with the leadership of the AFL or more moderate AFT unionists. The American Federation of Labor's leadership viewed the CP's involvement in the AFT with alarm, so much so that in 1936 the AFL investigated New York's Local 5 on charges of being communist-dominated and recommended that the AFT Executive Council take action against the union. Because the AFT was led by leftists at the time, and the left-led AFT Local 5 held considerable influence at the national level, the union refused to investigate Local 5. At the 1937 annual AFT convention, there was a contentious debate about whether or not the AFT should support or work alongside the CIO. The AFT convention voted to support the CIO and called on the AFL to do so as well.<sup>154</sup> The leftist leadership of the AFT, alongside the AFT's very public support for the CIO, would contribute to an increase in internal divisions in the union.

Internal divisions within the AFT ultimately resulted in a successful takeover of the leadership by conservatives, paving the way for the expulsion of left-led locals from the union. As John Lyons has shown in his examination of the AFT's history in Chicago, the opposition of the more professional and politically moderate Chicago Teachers Union, in particular, presented a strong challenge to the power of the left-led New York locals.<sup>155</sup> During the AFT's annual convention in Buffalo, New York in 1939, George Counts, with the support of more moderate AFT leaders and other

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<sup>154</sup> Cain, "Unionised Faculty and the Political Left," 525; Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 162.

<sup>155</sup> Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, 56.



liberals and leftists critical of the CP's politics, successfully challenged Jerome Davis for the presidency, beating Davis by 24 votes. Additionally, people who had previously sympathized and worked alongside the CP and their allies, including Davis, switched sides in the union as a result of the Soviet Union's signing of the Non-Aggression Pact with Nazi Germany in 1939.<sup>156</sup> Though Counts won the presidency, he and his allies were unable to take power on the Executive Council until the following year's convention when the domestic Red Scare and Stalin's assassination of Leon Trotsky in Mexico, according to Timothy Cain, "further coalesced the anti-Stalinist forces."<sup>157</sup> It was at the 1940 convention, moreover, that the American Federation of Teachers formally resolved to politically oppose communism and the Soviet Union.<sup>158</sup> William Green, the president of the American Federation of Labor, spoke at the AFT convention in 1940, declaring, "I urge you to put your house in order," and asserted that the AFL would not help the AFT by providing money for organizing drives "until you first make clear to the nation that you are an American institution."<sup>159</sup> The pressure of the AFL, which by the late 1930s viewed the AFT as communist-dominated, bolstered efforts to unseat CP members and allies from the Executive Council.

Once firmly in power in 1940, the more politically conservative leadership of the AFT went on the offensive against communism within the union. In 1941, the AFT investigated and revoked the charters of three left-led unions: the New York

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<sup>156</sup> Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 166.

<sup>157</sup> Cain, "Unionised Faculty and the Political Left," 529.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 532.

<sup>159</sup> Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 168.

City Teachers Union, Local 5; the Philadelphia teachers' union, Local 192; and the New York City College Local 537.<sup>160</sup> As a result, the union lost one-third of its total membership.<sup>161</sup> Simultaneously, the AFT granted a charter to the Teachers Guild in New York, which had previously split from Local 5 when it was unable to gain power within the union—the Teachers Guild would evolve into the United Federation of Teachers in 1960, becoming the largest and most influential union local within the national AFT. Like the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers a few years later, the now expelled left-led New York Teachers Union would maintain its existence for a number of years, becoming Local 555 when it joined the United Public Workers of America, a CIO affiliate.<sup>162</sup> Murphy explains that the two-day AFT hearing to determine the future of Local 5 “resembled a debate over the nature of teacher unionism. Issues ranged from the importance with industrial unions, not just AFL-affiliated unions, to the significance of working on community projects.”<sup>163</sup>

After an interlude of a few years during World War II when the U.S. was allied with the Soviet Union, amidst the rapidly escalating Cold War in the late 1940s the AFT sought to finalize its project of expelling communists and other leftists from the union, this time by investigating left-led locals on the West Coast. The genesis of the national office's investigation into AFT Local 430 had to do with internal political schisms within the Los Angeles local.

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<sup>160</sup> Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*, 73; Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers*, 117-119.

<sup>161</sup> Cain, “Unionised Faculty and the Political Left,” 534.

<sup>162</sup> Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*, 73.

<sup>163</sup> Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 170.

Dissidents within AFT Local 430 formed a caucus, the Committee for a Democratic Union (CDU), to challenge the leftist leadership of Local 430 in the union's election in 1948. The Committee for a Democratic Union objected to the leadership's focus on broader political issues, accusing the leadership of being sympathetic to communism. Specifically, the committee wanted Local 430 to eschew a focus on broader social issues and instead focus almost exclusively on teachers' issues. In its "statement of beliefs," it stated,

We believe the that the primary concern of the organization should be the professional problems of teachers, remuneration, working conditions, standards of admission to the profession, and all matters affecting the welfare of children, the schools and teachers. While we believe that teachers should take a leading part in political and social movements for the improvement of the community apart from the schools, we feel that such activities should be carried on primarily in organizations other than professional.<sup>164</sup>

The CDU connected this desire to make the union more focused on the professional concerns of teachers to anti-communism. In February, 1948 Edith Cooke, member of the CDU and Corresponding Secretary for Local 430, wrote to Irvin Kuenzli, the Secretary-Treasurer of the AFT, "it is the persistent refusal of the controlling clique to permit the condemnation of any type of totalitarianism," and then referred to the fact that the "majority of the leadership" refused to re-print the anti-communist section of the AFT's constitution in Local 430's newsletter.<sup>165</sup> Hy Weintrab, a history teacher at Belmont High School, was quoted in the *Los Angeles*

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<sup>164</sup> The Committee for a Democratic Union, "Statement of Beliefs," AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.

<sup>165</sup> Edith Cooke to Irvine R. Kuenzli, Secretary-Treasurer of the AFT, February 2, 1948, AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.

*Times* in August, 1948 as saying that the leadership of Local 430 followed a “Communitic line.”<sup>166</sup> A CDU flyer, distributed in 1948, further stated that the group, presumably in contrast to the leadership of Local 430, stands in “opposition to totalitarianism, both Communist and fascist.”<sup>167</sup> As noted above, prior to members of the Communist Party and other leftists coming to power within the AFT in the 1930s, the AFT leadership emphasized the ideology of professionalism as a key characteristic of the AFT’s version of unionism. The Committee for a Democratic Union’s emphasis on professionalism, in conjunction with its clear anti-communism, reflects the potency of professionalism as an ideology shaping teacher unionism, this time molded by the Red Scare politics of the late 1940s.

The Committee for a Democratic Union, as its name suggests, also professed concerns about democratic practices within Local 430. Though the name of the group is perhaps connected to its denunciation of “totalitarianism” in favor of American democracy, the CDU criticized the leadership of Local 430 for violating democratic principles. Weintraub, the history teacher, accused Local 430’s leadership of voting “late in meetings after most of its members had left” and he charged that the local’s elections were not “always held in secrecy,” according to the *Los Angeles Times* in August, 1948.<sup>168</sup> CDU leader Walter Thomas said that it was difficult for the group to

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<sup>166</sup> “Loyalty Issue Put to Teachers Local,” August 22, 1948, *Los Angeles Times*.

<sup>167</sup> The Committee for a Democratic Union Q&A Flyer, AFT Collection series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.

<sup>168</sup> “Loyalty Issue Put to Teachers Local,” August 22, 1948, *Los Angeles Times*.

be heard in meetings, claiming that president Harold Orr did not recognize CDU members who wanted to speak.<sup>169</sup> A CDU flyer further asserted,

It is customary for entrenched officers to ‘view with alarm’ people who challenge them. It is not customary to brand such aspirants for office as ‘spies, union-busters, liars, rumor-spreaders, reactionaries.’ A truly democratic spirit acknowledges the need for discussion, and that an honest difference of opinion may exist.<sup>170</sup>

As further proof of undemocratic practices within Local 430, the CDU pointed to Harold Orr’s position as president of the local for nearly a decade.<sup>171</sup> Edith Cooke also charged Orr with taking credit for the work of the local’s Committee for Democracy in Education, of which Cooke, Jane O’Bryan, Marguerite Cole, and Louise Whitehead were members. Cooke declared in a strongly worded letter in January, 1947 to Orr and other Local officers, “Mr. President, your bland claim of total credit for this Committee’s work, in which you showed little interest during progress, seems to be borrowing some polish for your slightly tarnished halo.”<sup>172</sup>

These differences over the political orientation of Local 430, as well as concern over the lack of democratic practices within it, led the Committee for a Democratic Union to run an entire slate of candidates to unseat the local’s leadership in the January, 1948 union election. CDU member Theodore Whitehead ran against Harold Orr for president, asserting, in contrast to Orr, that he “advocates more than

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<sup>169</sup> Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 35.

<sup>170</sup> Walter S. Thomas, President, and Edith M. Cook, Secretary, Committee for a Democratic Union, to Union Members, January 20, 1948, AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.

<sup>171</sup> Linnea Alexander, “Reply to a Letter from Mr. Orr’s Campaigners,” [n.d], AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.

<sup>172</sup> Edith Cooke to the Officers of Local 430, January 21, 1947, AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.

lip service” to the “ideals of American democracy,” and pledging close cooperation with the American Federation of Labor at the local and state levels. Walter Thomas ran against incumbent Abraham Minkus for vice president, with one of his platform principles being that he would not “front for political extremists,” presumably something that Minkus and other union leaders had been doing. Edith Cooke, the only incumbent who was also a member of the CDU, ran again for Corresponding Secretary against Elsie Elieson, an AFT “contact member,” according to the union newsletter, at Virgil Junior High School. The CDU contested many other positions in the 1948 election as well.<sup>173</sup> The election results, reported to the national office of the AFT on February 2, 1948, show that the Committee for a Democratic Union lost the election, though not without a considerable fight. For instance, for the presidency, incumbent Orr received 334 votes while Whitehead obtained 157 votes. For the vice presidency, Minkus won with 310 votes, while Walter Thomas received 187 votes.<sup>174</sup> In other words, Whitehead received 32 percent of the votes in his bid for the presidency, while Thomas received 38 percent of the vote. Though the CDU lost, these election results perhaps point to the fact that there good amount of discontent with the current leadership. In an interview many years later with Clancy, Thomas claimed that voting irregularities may also have resulted in the CDU’s defeat.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> “Special Election Issue,” *The Los Angeles Teacher* VIII, no. 4, January 1948, AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.

<sup>174</sup> Edith Cooke to Irvine R. Kuenzli, Secretary-Treasurer of the AFT, February 2, 1948, AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.

<sup>175</sup> Clancy, Jr., “The History of the American Federation of Teachers in Los Angeles, 1919-1969,” 82–83.

When it lost the election, the Committee for a Democratic Union appealed to the national office of the AFT to investigate Local 430 on charges of communism, and grant the dissidents a new union charter. In a letter to the national office in February, 1948, Cooke said the CDU would not be able to fulfill an AFT requirement that the group get 30 percent of the membership to officially request an investigation because of the “present stranglehold of the group in office.” In the letter, Cook threatened that the people active in the CDU “could” allow their memberships in the union to lapse and “wait for a more auspicious time to work actively with the labor movement” should the AFT not agree to the committee’s requests.<sup>176</sup>

The AFT Executive Council conceded to the appeal to investigate Local 430, ultimately deciding to revoke the local’s charter in the fall of 1948. An investigating committee consisting of three AFT Executive Council officers—Vice Presidents Selma Borchardt and Arthur Elder, and AFT President John Eklund—conducted an investigation in Los Angeles on September 1- 5, 1948. The investigating committee spent five days in Los Angeles talking to current and past officers of Local 430, as well as members of the community and AFL labor representatives at the local and state levels.<sup>177</sup> During the investigative hearings, according to Local 430’s newsletter, “member after member spoke in high praise of the democratic character of our union, the fine quality of the leadership and their devoted work in the interest of better education.” Approximately 85 members appeared on the first day, and about 75 the

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<sup>176</sup> Edith Cooke to Irvine R. Kuenzli, Secretary-Treasurer of the AFT, February 2, 1948, AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.

<sup>177</sup> Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 35; Clancy, Jr., “The History of the American Federation of Teachers in Los Angeles, 1919-1969,” 85.

following day. Despite this show of support, the Local 430 received a letter on September 20, 1948 from the Executive Council stating their decision to revoke Local 430's charter, subject to an appeal at the AFT's national convention in 1949.<sup>178</sup>

The AFT Executive Council's rationale for purging Local 430 primarily cited political differences between the national office and Local 430. Despite claims by the Committee for a Democratic Union that some of Local 430's practices were undemocratic, the AFT did not cite this as part of its rationale in its summary of the AFT's decision to expel Local 430 issued in late 1948. Rather, the AFT charged that Local 430 "participated officially in affairs with groups and agencies whose activities were embarrassing to the labor movement and tend to alienate community support." The AFT called Local 430's appearances before the school board "undignified and discreditable," and further argued that Local 430 cooperated with the United Public Workers, a CIO affiliate, while at the same time the union "constantly and publicly flaunted its differences" with the AFL-affiliated central trades council." The Executive Council also referred to turnover in Local 430's membership and stressed that Local 430 "failed to take action in support of Section 9, Article 3 of the AFT Constitution when such action was proposed."<sup>179</sup> This last reference is to the section

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<sup>178</sup> *The Los Angeles Teacher* IX, no. 1, September 1948, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

<sup>179</sup> "Summary of A.F. of T. Council Action in Connection with Revocation of Charter Local #430 Los Angeles," AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.



of the AFT constitution that prohibits AFT member from also holding membership in “totalitarian” organizations, including the Communist Party.<sup>180</sup>

AFT Local 430 unsuccessfully appealed the revocation of its charter at the AFT’s national convention in 1949. Local 430 wrote in the its newsletter in September, 1948 that the “revocation of the charter also indicates an obvious surrender on the part of the national officers to the atmosphere of hysteria and the attempted intimidation of the labor movement.” In its appeal letter to the AFT’s national office, reprinted in the union’s September, 1948 newsletter, Local 430 argued that the action taken was “arbitrary, capricious, and illegal” and that it had “no basis whatever in fact for the action taken.”<sup>181</sup> AFT Local 430 brought its appeal before the AFT convention in 1949. Eklund, the AFT president, began by presenting the AFT leadership’s case against Local 430, stating mostly what had been stated in its report justifying the charter revocation. Eklund emphasized, without saying as much, links between Local 430 and various organizations, actions, and political positions associated with the Communist Party, including linking Local 430 with supporting American Youth for Democracy (which replaced the Young Communist League in 1944), the United Public Workers (which would shortly be expelled from the CIO on charges of communism), the People’s Educational Center, the State Legislative Conference, the Committee on Intellectual Freedom, and Local 430’s stated opposition to U.S. involvement in World War II until after June, 1941 (which

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<sup>180</sup> AFT Convention Proceedings, 1949, AFT Collection, part II, series VIII folder 1, folder 14, box 24.

<sup>181</sup> *The Los Angeles Teacher* IX, no. 1, September 1948, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

was when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union, thereby nullifying the Stalin-Hitler Pact of 1939), among other things.<sup>182</sup>

Local 430 President Harold Orr led the union's appeal at the convention in 1949, focusing on the lack of due process in the revocation of Local 430's charter rather than the political allegations. Orr dramatically declared, "even the worst criminal in the land is given formal charges with a chance to answer them, to see the evidence against him...Local 430 never had formal charges and therefore never had the opportunity to answer them." Orr further asserted that neither the investigating committee nor the Executive Council bothered to listen to the recorded testimony held at a Local 430 meeting on September 2, 1948. Orr noted that the officers of Local 430 were told by the AFT that the investigation would not be publicized, but an article appeared in the *Los Angeles Herald* on September 4, 1948 with a quote by President Eklund saying that they are investigating Local 430 because of charges that communists had gained power in the union. Orr also claimed that the investigating committee never made the evidence against Local 430 available for a reply before, just one week after the investigating committee left Los Angeles, the AFT informed the union that its charter had been revoked.<sup>183</sup> In the end, despite Orr's remonstrations, the AFT convention voted to uphold the charter revocation by a vote

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<sup>182</sup> AFT Convention Proceedings 1949, 117, AFT Collection, part II, series VIII, folder 14, box 24.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 126-128.

of 792 to 108.<sup>184</sup> In response, Orr referred to the discussion that led to the vote as an “orgy of red-baiting,” and said that the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers would continue as an independent union “free from the thought-control domination of the leaders of the AFT.”<sup>185</sup>

The newly chartered AFT Local 1021 in Los Angeles was slow to get off the ground and more politically moderate than its predecessor, Local 430. After Local 430’s charter revocation in September 1948, a year before Local 430’s appeal, the AFT granted a charter to the dissidents associated with the Committee for a Democratic Union, establishing AFT Local 1021. According to Clancy, the union “barely survived” under its first few presidents.<sup>186</sup> In fact, over the course of the 1950s AFT Local 1021 was quite weak. Though the Committee for a Democratic Union faulted Local 430 for not increasing its membership at a fast enough pace, Local 1021’s membership numbers were mostly stagnant in early to mid-1950s.<sup>187</sup> In 1949, AFT Local 1021 had 127 members, and a full six years later its membership had only increased to 250 members. By the late 1950s and through the 1960s, in part due to an infusion of financial resources into the union by the AFT at the state and national levels, Local 1021 began to increase in size and become much more active.<sup>188</sup> AFT

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<sup>184</sup> Clancy, Jr., “The History of the American Federation of Teachers in Los Angeles, 1919-1969,” 86; Murray Illson, “Education in Review: Problems of Communism and Organization Dominate Meeting of Teachers’ Federation,” *New York Times*, August 28, 1949.

<sup>185</sup> Murray Illson, “AFL for School Aid Without Any Bias,” *New York Times*, August 24, 1949.

<sup>186</sup> Clancy, Jr., “The History of the American Federation of Teachers in Los Angeles, 1919-1969,” 102.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

Local 1021, moreover, adopted the politics of its founders, eschewing the social unionism of Local 430 in favor of nearly exclusive focus on a more narrow set of bread and butter issues.

The revocation of Local 430's charter in 1948 was part of the AFT's efforts to root out left-led unions on the west coast. In 1948, the AFT also revoked the charter of the left-led University of Washington Teachers Union, Local 401, on charges of communism. The same year, the AFT's executive committee also investigated Local 61, the teachers' union for public school teachers in San Francisco, but rather than revoking Local 61's charter demanded that the union cooperate with the Central Labor Body, and "withdraw its affiliation with, and support of, the California Labor School," which was under investigation by the state on charges of subversion. The AFT found that Local 61 satisfactorily responded to its stipulations, and chose not to revoke the union's charter.<sup>189</sup>

In short, in the late 1940s the American Federation of Teachers expelled two more left-led locals, this time on the West Coast, contributing to a culmination of its campaign to root out communists and other leftists. According to Fred Glass, as a result of the expulsion of Local 430, in the late 1940s the AFT in California decreased its membership by half, setting back the cause of teacher unionism in California.<sup>190</sup>

The outcome of this renewed witch hunt was a political turning point for the American Federation of Teachers, as the union removed its leftist union locals

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<sup>189</sup> "Report Re: Revocation of the Charters of Local 430, 401, and the Investigation of Local 61," AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Charter of 430, box 10.

<sup>190</sup> Glass, *A History of the California Federation of Teachers, 1919-1989*, 18.

committed to broad social change. The new Los Angeles teachers' union, AFT Local 1021, in contrast to Local 430, made no mention in its literature of a desire to challenge racial inequality in the schools or in society more generally. This clearly struck a blow to the struggle against racism within teacher unionism in Los Angeles. Anti-communism within the AFT also decreased the level of democracy within the union. When the Committee for a Democratic Union lost its bid to unseat Local 430's leadership, it successfully appealed to the AFT to simply revoke Local 430's charter. The AFT's purging of left-led locals, moreover, displayed an unwillingness to allow affiliated locals to hold a politics in opposition to those of the national office, reflecting a major increase in intolerance for dissent within the union. The purging of left-led locals reflected a centralization of power within the American Federation of Teachers, decreasing bottom-up democracy. Though it is clear that the purging of Local 430 and other communist-led locals represented a weakening of democracy within the union, the concerns about democratic practices within Local 430 complicate this history. It is impossible, based on the available sources, to be certain about the veracity of the claims made by the Committee for a Democratic Union, but it is safe to assume that at least some of their concerns were valid, including their concern that Local 430's leadership was somewhat intolerant of the political opinions of more politically moderate union activists. Local 430 continued to exist as the independent Los Angeles Federation of Teachers, but not for very long. In the early to mid-1950s the leadership of the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers were subjected to a renewed anti-communist crusade against leftist teachers.

### **The Blacklisting of Teachers in Los Angeles in the 1950s**

After the failed attempt in 1946 to blacklist Eisenberg and Bettington, high school teachers at Canoga Park High School, AFT Local 430 found its attentions divided by anti-communism yet again in 1948, this time to defend itself against charges by its own parent union, the American Federation of Teachers. Once Local 430's charter revocation was confirmed in 1949, the leftist leadership of the union reorganized themselves as the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers (LAFT), which attempted to maintain its existence as an independent left-led teacher union, an alternative to the newly-chartered and more politically conservative AFT Local 1021. However, the union's leadership once again found itself subject to the Red Scare. Throughout the 1950s, federal, state, and local investigation committees subjected LAFT leaders to interrogation about their political beliefs and associations. Unlike the Canoga Park High School case, however, this time anti-communists successfully fired leftist teachers. The LAFT did what it could to organize against this renewed blacklist, but the firing of the LAFT's leaders and the redirection of the union's energies toward defense of teachers against the blacklist ultimately resulted in the demise of this left-led teacher union in Los Angeles.

The first person to be targeted under the renewed 1950s anti-communist crusade against teachers, Harold Orr, was targeted specifically for his political activism as president of AFT Local 430 and its successor, the Los Angeles Federation

of Teachers.<sup>191</sup> In 1948 Harold Orr, alongside Jung, affiliated with the United Public Workers of America, and Dr. Sanford Goldner, president of the American Jewish Labor Council, had brought charges against Nell Haas, an elementary school principal, before the Los Angeles School Board, claiming he was guilty of being anti-union, anti-Semitic, and for “showing contempt against professional Negro people.” A special hearing committee dismissed the latter two charges but found that the principal did show an unsympathetic attitude toward Local 430.<sup>192</sup> That same year the school board sharply rebuked Orr and others who brought the complaint before the Board, accusing them of being “guilty of bad faith in giving wide-spread publicity to their violent and abusive charges” and ordered that they be censured. According to Verdries, J. Paul Elliott, president of the California School Trustees Association, connected the complaints to the Communist Party, asserting, “it has become obvious that whether these gentlemen are connected directly with the Communist Party line or not, their program of attack on the public schools in this community is in full accord with the Communist Party program.”<sup>193</sup>

As a result of the Haas case, in October of 1950 the California Senate Investigating Committee on Education subpoenaed Orr to inquire into his political beliefs and associations. According to the LAFT newsletter, Orr “firmly resisted” any inquiry into his politics, and he declared, “as a loyal American with twenty-five years of teaching as my witness, I abhor the forces of bigotry and hysteria which set the

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<sup>191</sup> *The Los Angeles Teacher*, November-December 1950 XI, no. 3, L.A. Teachers Union Collection, 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

<sup>192</sup> Verdries, “Teaching With the Enemy,” 68–69.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

mark of the leper on every kind of liberal.” Orr justified his refusal to answer a question about whether or not he was a member of the Communist Party by pronouncing, “I would not be a party to the violation of my rights under the Bill of Rights by allowing an inquisition into my private beliefs and associations.” In response, the Committee filed misdemeanor complaints against Orr and Dr. Linus Pauling, a California Technical Institute professor also under investigation, in an attempt to fire the two.<sup>194</sup>

In order to facilitate the blacklisting of leftist teachers, on September 22, 1952 the Los Angeles Board of Education adopted Board Rule 1907. Board Rule 1907 mandated that any employee who was a member of the Communist Party presently or within a year of the adoption of the rule come forward within thirty days with a “verified statement” that she or he is no longer a member of the Communist Party. Failure to do so would result in dismissal on charges of insubordination. The rule also dictated that employees who refused to cooperate with legal investigations into subversion would be dismissed.<sup>195</sup> In response, the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers declared, “in time our schools would be staffed not by teachers, but by

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<sup>194</sup> *The Los Angeles Teacher*, November-December 1950 XI, no. 3, L.A. Teachers Union Collection, 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

<sup>195</sup> Los Angeles City School Districts, Superintendent’s Bulletin no. 1, September 23, 1952, To: All Employees, From: Alexander J. Stoddard Superintendent, Subject: Rules and Orders of the Board of Education Relating to (a) membership in the CP and (b) the obligation to answer questions concerning duties and loyalty, Abraham Minkus Papers: Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles (hereafter Minkus Papers), 1945-1983, folder 2, box 1, Southern California Library.



vacuous guides to conformity, who evade controversial issues, associations, and ideas. Students would not learn to think, but to repeat.”<sup>196</sup>

A short time later, in late 1952 the California state Committee on Un-American Activities, also known as the Burns Committee (the successor to the Tenney Committee), targeted two teacher union activists, explicitly linking them to the controversy over public housing in Los Angeles. Eisenberg, a high school teacher—by now, with twenty years of teaching experience—at Fairfax High School after being transferred from Canoga Park High School, found herself once again a target of investigation. Jean Wilkinson, a colleague of Eisenberg’s when they both taught at Canoga Park High School, with ten years of teaching experience, was also investigated. Both were active within AFT Local 430 and the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers. Eisenberg was the editor of the union’s newsletter as well as an Executive Board officer. When she was subpoenaed, Wilkinson was on pregnancy leave from teaching (she also contracted polio during her pregnancy), but had been a teacher for ten years, was a former officer of the union, and past chair of the union’s Committee on the Defense of the Schools.<sup>197</sup>

The immediate trigger for the investigation of Wilkinson and Eisenberg was their support for interracial public housing in Los Angeles. During World War II the defense industry in Los Angeles greatly expanded, attracting many new people to the

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<sup>196</sup> *The Los Angeles Teacher* XIII, no. 2, October 1952, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

<sup>197</sup> *The Los Angeles Teacher* XIII, no. 3, November 1952, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2; *The Los Angeles Teacher* XI, no. 10, June 1951, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

city, African Americans in particular, in search of work in the defense plants. New arrivals to Los Angeles found an acute housing shortage, in addition to an increase in racial segregation in the city after the influx of African American migrants. This housing shortage increased with the end of the war, as veterans returning home were looking for places to live. In response to the demands of civil rights organizers, in 1943 the Housing Authority of Los Angeles (HACLA) implemented completely integrated public housing. In the post-war years, according to Sides, public housing in Los Angeles was racially integrated, comfortable, and safe and often served as a way station on the way to private home ownership. While many white people utilized public housing in the immediate post-war years, by the late 1940s and early 1950s, as white families moved out, more poor black families moved in. There was also an increase in the proportion of Mexicans seeking public housing at the same time, though the proportion of African Americans living in public housing was much higher. By 1959, for example, 65 percent of public housing tenants in Los Angeles were black, while Mexicans comprised 19 percent of Los Angeles Housing Authority's tenants. In other words, writes Sides, in the late 1940s and early 1950s "public housing, both in reality and in public perception, was becoming synonymous with black housing."<sup>198</sup>

In 1952, in the context of the Red Scare and the increasing association of public housing with African Americans, the real estate lobby of Los Angeles sought to undermine the housing authority's efforts to expand affordable housing in Los

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<sup>198</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 117-118.

Angeles on an explicitly integrated basis by accusing the housing authority of being dominated by communists. On August 29, 1952, the attack became personal when the white director of publicity for the housing authority, Frank Wilkinson, was testifying as an expert witness for the California Housing Authority at the Superior Court; he was asked about the political organizations he had been involved with. When Wilkinson refused to answer these questions, asserting that providing an answer might result in self-incrimination, the California Housing Authority immediately suspended him. The Los Angeles City Council then voted unanimously to have the Burns Committee investigate the Housing Authority on charges of subversion.<sup>199</sup>

Though the anti-communist crusade against the Housing Authority of Los Angeles prompted the investigation into Eisenberg and Wilkinson, the two were ultimately fired because of their activism with the LAFT. The Burns Committee subpoenaed Eisenberg and Jean Wilkinson to testify about their political affiliations, and the two teachers refused, citing their constitutional rights. After Eisenberg wrote a letter of support for Frank Wilkinson, both she and Jean Wilkinson, who was married to Frank, were summoned before the Burns Committee.<sup>200</sup> When asked about membership in the Communist Party, Eisenberg and Wilkinson refused to answer. As a result, in November of 1952, the Los Angeles Board of Education dismissed both teachers on charges of insubordination and unprofessional conduct. Eisenberg explained her refusal to answer the committee's questions: "As a teacher, and as a

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<sup>199</sup> Parson, "Los Angeles' 'Headline-Happy Public Housing War,'" 260–261.

<sup>200</sup> Verdries, "Teaching With the Enemy," 214; Kransdorf, "A Matter of Loyalty," 68; *The Los Angeles Teacher* XIII, no. 3, November 1952, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

mother of two sons who fought in World War II, one giving his life for this very Constitution and democratic way of life it establishes and guarantees, I shall continue to uphold and protect our precious freedom of thought.” Wilkinson similarly cited her rights under the Constitution to explain her refusal: “I am proud of my record as a teacher, and proud too of my citizenship in the community. I refuse to give up what I consider to be what I consider to be the most important of all American rights — freedom of belief and freedom to act on those beliefs.”<sup>201</sup> Tenure allowed Eisenberg and Wilkinson to appeal their firing through the courts; it was not until over a year later, in early 1954 that the firing of both teachers was upheld by the courts.<sup>202</sup> With this case, anti-communist efforts to fire leftist teachers were finally successful.

The firing of these two teachers catalyzed renewed efforts to blacklist teachers in Los Angeles, with members and leaders of the left-led Los Angeles Federation of Teachers targeted in particular. The House Un-American Activities Committee at the federal level — also known as the Velde Committee — subpoenaed prominent leaders of the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers when it came to Los Angeles in March, 1953. The Velde Committee’s arrival in Los Angeles was on the heels of an announcement by the Superintendent of Education that 45 teachers, according to the union, “would be interrogated on the basis of ambiguous and anonymous charges of disloyalty.”<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> *The Los Angeles Teacher*, November 1952 XIII, no. 3, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

<sup>202</sup> Fariello, *Red Scare*, 1995, 466.

<sup>203</sup> Los Angeles Federation of Teachers, Press Release, October 27, 1952, Eisenberg Collection, folder 6: Teachers Fight Back, box 2.

The Velde committee subpoenaed Minkus, the vice president of the LAFT, for his activism in the CP and in the union, as well as his involvement in civil rights organizing. Minkus, a teacher of 19 years then at Reagan Avenue Elementary School, claimed his rights under the first and fifth amendments to the US constitution when he refused to answer questions about his politics. The Velde Committee asked him if he was at one point the section organizer for the Professional Section of the Los Angeles Communist Party, about his participation in the Citizens Committee for Better Education, which the Velde Committee claimed was a front group for the Communist Party, and asked questions, according to Kransdorf, about the CP's plot to take over the teachers' union.<sup>204</sup> Minkus's FBI file indicates that he was at one point a member of the Communist Party, but in a file dated June 16, 1949 the FBI asserts that Minkus had become "inactive" in the CP and removed him from the FBI's "Key Figure List."<sup>205</sup> Despite this, because of Minkus' refusal to answer questions, the Board of Education dismissed him on charges of "immoral conduct, unprofessional conduct, and evident unfitness for service." Minkus' dismissal on the "immoral conduct" charge was exceptional, as no other teachers faced a similar charge. Under the state's tenure law, a teacher dismissed on charges of "immoral conduct" could be dismissed immediately.<sup>206</sup> Minkus later recalled that his prominent activism in the

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<sup>204</sup> Abraham Minkus vs. Los Angeles City Board of Education, 1953, and 1955, 1977, May 5, 1953, Minkus Papers, folder 2, box 2; Libbie and Abe Minkus, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, tape 2, box 2; Los Angeles Board of Education vs. Abraham Minkus, 1953-1954, Minkus Papers, folder 2, box 1; Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 77.

<sup>205</sup> Abraham Minkus' FBI File, Minkus Papers, folder 6, box 1.

<sup>206</sup> *The Los Angeles Teacher*, April 1953 XIII, no. 4, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

left-led teachers' union was one of the main reasons that he was targeted during the Red Scare. His wife, Libbie Minkus, who worked as a substitute high school teacher in the Los Angeles school system, stopped receiving calls to substitute teacher as a result of the hearing.<sup>207</sup>

In 1953, Harry Shepro and Serill Gerber, leaders in AFT Local 430, were blacklisted, further attesting to the fact that prominent activists with the left-led teacher union were specifically subject to the anti-communist crusade in education. In early April, 1953 the Velde Committee also called two other prominent teacher union activists to testify: Harry Shepro, the first president of AFT Local 430 in 1935 and a teacher of American history and government for over 30 years; and Serill Gerber, a sixth grade teacher and the Special Services Committee Chairman for the union. Like Minkus, both refused to answer the committee's questions and both were dismissed. But Shepro and Gerber were dismissed on charges of "unprofessional conduct, evident unfitness for service, and persistent violation of Board rules,"<sup>208</sup> and not due to "immoral conduct," like Minkus, though all three teachers refused to answer questions, claiming their rights under the first and fifth amendments to the US Constitution. As a result, neither Shepro nor Gerber immediately ceased teaching—their final termination happened in early January, 1954.<sup>209</sup> The case against the teachers was based, in part, on the testimony on cooperative witnesses. The Velde

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<sup>207</sup> Libbie and Abe Minkus, Interview with Greg, Goldin Collection, tape 2, box 2.

<sup>208</sup> *The Los Angeles Teacher*, April 1953 XIII, no. 4, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

<sup>209</sup> Minkus and Gerber vs. Los Angeles City Board of Education, 1951, 1977-1980, Minkus Papers, series 1, folder 3, box 2.

Committee interrogator, for instance, cited Louis Rosser's testimony claiming that Gerber was a one-time member of the Young Communist League as well as a member of the Communist Party.<sup>210</sup> The dismissal of the three teachers reveals the cooperative relationship between HUAC at the federal level and the Los Angeles Board of Education.

In 1953 and 1954, the Los Angeles School Board successfully sought the passage of a law in the state legislature that would make it possible to fire teachers on the spot for their refusal to testify about their political affiliations before investigating committees, making it easier to both weaken civil rights efforts in public schools and destroy the left-led teachers' union. The passage of such a law would avoid the delay caused by the tenure law in firing leftist teachers. According to Verdries, on January 8, 1953, Superintendent Stoddard presented a draft of a bill to the state legislature that would place the Los Angeles School Board's Rule 1907 in the state's Education Code.<sup>211</sup> The Dilworth Act, named after its sponsor state Senator Nelson Dilworth, became law in 1953.<sup>212</sup> Now, without any due process, any teacher or other school employee accused of subversion who refused to answer questions about whether or not they were affiliated with the Communist Party could be fired on the spot—this applied to anybody who claimed their rights under the first and fifth amendments to the US Constitution. At the same time, the Luckel Act was passed, mandating that all

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<sup>210</sup> Bruce A. Findlay, Assistant Superintendent, Board of Education of the City of Los Angeles, to Mr. Serrill Leonard Gerber, April 10, 1953, Minkus Papers, series II: Other Los Angeles Teachers, folder 8, box 3.

<sup>211</sup> Verdries, "Teaching With the Enemy," 101.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

California state employees answer questions asked by government interrogators.<sup>213</sup>

Martha Kransdorf argues that “school boards rushed to comply.” In the mid-1950s in Los Angeles, the entire list of 30,000 city workers was submitted for review.<sup>214</sup>

In 1953 the Los Angeles School Board immediately took advantage of the Dilworth Act to subpoena and dismiss leftist teachers, including teachers involved in the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers. Dr. Alexander Stoddard, the Superintendent of Schools, named 171 school employees as “suspected left-wingers,” according to the *Los Angeles Times*. Of this 171, the school board subpoenaed eight teachers to testify before a special meeting on December 16, 1953. Seven of the eight teachers openly disobeyed, despite the Dilworth Act, while one teacher apparently cooperated with the interrogators.<sup>215</sup> The teachers called to testify before the Board of Education’s special meeting were David Arkin, Helen Hughes, Minna Omanoff Cooper, June Sirell, Leon Goldin, Claire Sokolow Kaye, Charles Sassoon and Anne R. Shugerman.<sup>216</sup> With the exception of Shugerman, who was a cooperative witness, all seven were dismissed for their refusal to answer the Board’s questions.<sup>217</sup> Cooperative witnesses linked this round of blacklisting to what one witness called the Communist Party’s attempt “to control the policies of the teachers’ union.”<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> John W. Caughey, “Farewell to California’s ‘Loyalty’ Oath,” *Pacific Historical Review* 38, no. 2 (May 1969): 125.

<sup>214</sup> Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 33–34.

<sup>215</sup> “Seven L.A. Teachers Defy Board at Loyalty Hearing,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 17, 1953, Eisenberg Collection, folder 3, box 2.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> Verdries, “Teaching With the Enemy,” 109.

<sup>218</sup> Clancy, Jr., “The History of the American Federation of Teachers in Los Angeles, 1919-1969,” 88.



The blacklist continued through the 1950s, though the frequency of teachers being subpoenaed was erratic. In 1955, “Margaret,” a union activist who participated in organizing to hire more black teachers, refused to testify when she was subpoenaed in the spring of 1955.<sup>219</sup> In 1956, Donald Weiss, a math and social studies teacher at Stevenson Junior High School since 1950, was called to testify before the Board of Education. He refused to answer the Board’s questions, citing his rights under the US Constitution.<sup>220</sup> Eisenberg recalled in her interview that Weiss ultimately committed suicide due to the pressures.<sup>221</sup>

The last and greatest gasp of the Red Scare in California’s educational system came in 1959 when the House Un-American Activities Committee issues subpoenas to 110 teachers, 40 of them in Northern California and 70 in southern California. HUAC was scheduled to hold its hearings in early June, but postponed the hearings twice, first for September and then for October, 1959, before finally cancelling the hearings altogether, claiming it would allow local school boards to interrogate the teachers instead.<sup>222</sup> This was the first time HUAC had cancelled scheduled hearings. The committee then turned over a list of 93 names of California teachers to local school boards, with the result that four teachers were fired and two resigned out of fear.<sup>223</sup> Though HUAC did not return to Southern California, it did return to San

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<sup>219</sup> “Margaret,” Interview in *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>220</sup> “Board Hears Pros and Cons on Dilworth Act,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 1956.

<sup>221</sup> Frances Eisenberg, Interview with Greg Goldin Collection, tape 3, box 2.

<sup>222</sup> “California School Red Hearings Off,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 1959.

<sup>223</sup> Joshua Paddison, “Summers of Worry, Summers of Defiance: San Franciscans for Academic Freedom and Education and the Bay Area Opposition to HUAC, 1959-1960,” *California History* 78, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 195-196.

Francisco in May, 1960 to hold hearings for three days to investigate a “new batch of local ‘subversives,’” according to Joshua Paddison, most of whom were not teachers. In response to the hearing, anti-HUAC organizers staged mass protests. On the first day, 1,000 protesters gathered, and on the second day when protesters gathered again, the police turned high-powered fire hoses on the crowd, an incident that received wide publicity and proved to be a turning point in the Red Scare. The large protest against the hearings and the negative publicity caused by the police brutality helped to turn public opinion against the rabid anti-communism of the previous decade.<sup>224</sup>

The blacklisting of teachers in the 1950s did not happen without a fight by the teachers involved. Before the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers became much weaker in the mid- to late-1950s due to the blacklist, the union organized against the blacklist through its Academic Freedom Committee and then through the Teachers Defense Committee. From 1952 to 1954, both committees raised funds to help with the legal defense of the targeted teachers. The union also helped to organize an educational campaign, in addition to mass meetings and protests against the blacklisting. The Teachers Defense Committee, under the sponsorship of the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers, produced an animated cartoon in 1952 entitled, “The Man Who Hated Children,” about the blacklisting of teachers to increase public support for their campaign against the blacklist.<sup>225</sup> By the time of the last round of

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid, 188, 196.

<sup>225</sup> *The Los Angeles Teacher* XII, no. 10, August 1952; *The Los Angeles Teacher*, January 1953 XIII, no. 2; *The Los Angeles Teacher* XIII, no. 9, Jan 1954, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2; “Mass Protests Assail Teacher Loyalty Inquiry,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 15, 1953; “Joint Meeting of Representatives from the Los Angeles

subpoenas in southern California in 1959, the left-led teachers union no longer existed. Florence Sloat, one of the summoned teachers who had been active in the left-led New York teachers' union before arriving in Los Angeles, became the chair of the Teachers Defense Committee (TDC). The second version of the TDC was formed in 1959 specifically to organize in support of the 70 teachers in southern California subpoenaed by HUAC.<sup>226</sup> Though AFT Local 1021 and the AFT-affiliated California Federation of Teachers opposed the blacklist, the AFT did not lead the organizing against the blacklist in 1959.<sup>227</sup>

The blacklisting of Florence Sloat in 1962 represented one of the final moments in the blacklisting of teachers in Los Angeles. One of the subpoenaed teachers in 1959, Sloat was one of the leaders of organizing efforts against the blacklist. Sloat made her name public in an ACLU lawsuit against releasing the names of the 70 teachers in Southern California. She did so, "because I have already been humiliated by this Committee, I want to spare other teachers and their families the same distress."<sup>228</sup> Sloat referenced the fact that HUAC summoned her earlier in the year, in February, 1959, and then cancelled the proceedings. But the Los Angeles Board of Education, called her to testify under the Dilworth Act. She continued to

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Federation of Teachers and the Teachers Defense Committee," January 16, 1954, Eisenberg Collection, folder 5, box 2.

<sup>226</sup> Florence Muriel Sloat, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, tape 1, box 2.

<sup>227</sup> "California School Red Hearings Off," *Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 1959. In this article, the president of the California State Federation of Teachers deplores the fact that HUAC intended to turn over names to the local school board.

<sup>228</sup> American Civil Liberties Union Press Release, August 4, 1959, Florence Muriel Sloat Papers: Blacklisted Teachers in LA, 1959-1991 (hereafter Sloat Papers), Southern California Library.

teach, and was once again summoned, alongside the other 69 teachers, to appear before HUAC. Perhaps given Florence Sloat's public stance, as part of the ACLU lawsuit and then as chair of the Teachers Defense Committee, after nearly three years of teaching, on March 22, 1962 the Board of Education suspended Sloat under the Dilworth Act (which provided a statute of limitations of three years). After five and a half years of being blacklisted, with the help of the lawyers with the Teachers Defense Committee and the ACLU the Los Angeles Board of Education rescinded its policy implementing the Dilworth Act in 1968 and Sloat was able to return to teaching.<sup>229</sup>

Though AFT Local 430 was expelled from the AFT in 1948, it might have lived on as an independent union had the blacklisting of Los Angeles teachers not taken place. The leadership of the independent Los Angeles Federation of Teachers was targeted during the blacklist, and the energies of the union were diverted toward the defense of targeted teachers. Essentially, the blacklist finished what the expulsion of Local 430 had started—namely, the demise of left-led teacher unionism in Los Angeles.

## **Conclusion**

Though the U.S. government's repression of radical dissent lived on, the period we now refer to as McCarthyism became progressively weaker over the course of the 1950s and early 1960s. The Dilworth Act, passed in 1953 in California, made it

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<sup>229</sup> Florence M. Sloat, Summary of Events Relating to Her Blacklisting, September, 1973, Sloat Papers.

mandatory for teachers to sign an oath declaring they were not members of the Communist Party; it also required teachers to answer questions about their present and past associations with the Communist Party. The teachers who, because of political principle, refused to cooperate with investigating committees were fired by their local school boards. The Dilworth Act faced a series of legal challenges throughout the 1950s and 1960s as teachers attempted to win their jobs back. Finally, the Los Angeles Board of Education formally stopped implementing the Dilworth Act in 1968.<sup>230</sup> Though it is difficult to come up with a specific number, it is safe to say that approximately 200 teachers in the Los Angeles area alone were either fired or resigned out of fear during the Red Scare. The Democratic Party rose to power in the California in the mid-1950s, helping at least to weaken some of the more extreme tendencies of the Red Scare. Additionally, the rise of the New Left and the various social movements of the 1960s and 1970s helped to shift the country to the left politically. As a result, repression of leftist radicals became less mainstream and more covert. The FBI's Counter Intelligence Program, or COINTELPRO, throughout the 1960s placed various leftist people and groups under surveillance, and specifically aimed to discredit and disrupt political organizing the government deemed to be too "subversive."<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 107.

<sup>231</sup> For more on COINTELPRO, see, for example, Ward Churchill, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement*, Corrected ed (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990); Kenneth O'Reilly, *Racial Matters: The FBI's Secret File on Black America, 1960-1972* (New York: Free Press, 1989).

The Red Scare's impact on teacher unionism in Los Angeles and nationally was far-reaching. The campaign to root out communists within the American Federation of Teachers began in 1941 and culminated with the expulsion of AFT Local 430, the left-led teachers' union in Los Angeles, in 1948. The purging of communists from the AFT was made easier by the prevalence of frenzied anti-communism in society in general, but the leadership of the AFT must also be held ultimately responsible for its very active complicity in the purges that took place during the 1940s. The inauguration of the anti-communist campaign within the AFT began quite early, several years before the start of the Cold War and the intensification of McCarthyism. AFT Vice President Arthur Elder, arguing in support of the revocation of Local 430's charter at the union's 1949 convention, plainly stated the objective of the expulsion:

We are here this afternoon deciding not only the future of the particular local in question...but I am sure I am still speaking for the [Executive] Council that...we are here this afternoon and this evening very largely shaping the future of our American Federation of Teachers. We are in a measure going to decide what kind of organization this American Federation of Teachers should be.<sup>232</sup>

The AFT's revocation of Local 430's charter and the subsequent blacklisting of union leaders and other leftist teachers facilitated both the demise of left-led teacher unionism in Los Angeles in the 1950s, as well as a rightward turn in the AFT nationally. Local 430 and its successor, the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers, promoted what scholars often refer to as social unionism, a combined focus on

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<sup>232</sup> AFT Convention Proceedings 1949, AFT Collection, part II, series VIII, folder 14, box 24.

promoting bread and butter issues and organizing for social and economic justice in society more broadly. The union, in large part because of the influence of the Communist Party, prioritized anti-racism in its union work—this was also the case with the left-led teachers’ union in New York City, AFT Local 5, expelled from the AFT in 1941. Both unions demanded the hiring of more African American and other teachers of color. They also promoted the incorporation of intercultural education—African American history, in particular—into the school curriculum. The AFT’s expulsion of Local 430 therefore set the stage for the adoption of a version of unionism less committed to the struggle against racism, and certainly less committed to racial militancy. This political transition within the AFT made it possible for the Oceanhill-Brownsville conflict to take place in the fall of 1968, pitting advocates of community control of the public schools, a cause promoted by Black Power activists, against the white-led United Federation of Teachers, the New York City AFT affiliate.<sup>233</sup>

Activists within the AFT incorporated the idea of professionalism into their efforts to root out communists, giving the history of anti-communism within teachers’ unions a unique character. The anti-communists within Local 430 were proponents of what they deemed a more “professional” version of unionism, in contrast to the social unionism of the union’s leftist leadership. In their argument for a more limited version of unionism—business unionism—anti-communist Local 430 members described a focus on broad social issues as lacking in professionalism. Thus, they

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<sup>233</sup> For more on the Oceanhill-Brownsville conflict, see Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis*; Perlstein, *Justice, Justice*.

used the notion that teachers should act professionally to support business unionism within the AFT. The campaign to purge left-led locals resulted in the weakening of democracy within the AFT, as it facilitated the emergence of greater centralization within the union and a greater intolerance of political dissent. Due to the expulsion of some of the AFT's most active locals and the diversion of the union's attentions from expanding the unionization of teachers, anti-communism slowed the emergence of teacher unionism, and therefore public sector unionism more generally.

What happened to the teachers who were blacklisted? Some left teaching altogether, while others found ways to continue educating children. Abraham Minkus, the old Vice President of Local 430/LAFT who was a staunch advocate for intercultural education, became a salesman of washing machines under, a profession that he did not particularly relish. In an interview many years later, Minkus said of his blacklisting from teaching, "I felt that I was wasted, wasted. I think I had the ability to make a more significant contribution to American life than I see in helping maintain the laundry and dry cleaning industry." Both Minkus and June Sirell, another blacklisted teacher, lamented their reduced pensions.<sup>234</sup> Blacklisted teacher and union activist Charles Sassoon continued his political work, facing the blacklist for a second time when he worked on ships and was active in the left-led Marine Cooks and Stewards Union.<sup>235</sup> Jean Wilkinson, after her divorce from Frank Wilkinson, moved to Berkeley in 1965 and became a public school teacher there. She

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<sup>234</sup> Libbie and Abe Minkus, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, tape 2, box 2; June Sirell, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, box 2.

<sup>235</sup> Greg Goldin, Term Paper, 15, Goldin Collection, folder 2, box 1.



helped to develop curricula on women's history for the public schools, co-editing several books on women's history.<sup>236</sup> Frances Eisenberg made a good living as a tutor for many years, and continued to be politically active. Later in life, she was an organizer in behalf of senior citizens in West Hollywood, becoming involved in the West Hollywood Senior Advisory Council from its founding in 1987.<sup>237</sup> After she was fired in 1962, Florence Sloat went back to school to get a Master's Degree in Fine Arts. She also continued to teach, first in a private school and then she was able to teach at a school outside of the city of Los Angeles for five years, before being reinstated in 1968.<sup>238</sup>

In 1981, several blacklisted teachers active in Local 430 and the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers received word that their lawsuit to have their teaching credentials reinstated had been successful. A Los Angeles Superior Court judge ruled that the blacklisted teachers should have been reinstated in 1968, when the School Board rescinded its policy of firing leftist teachers, and stipulated a collective settlement amount of \$200,000 for the back pay and damage caused to the blacklisted teachers.<sup>239</sup> Only one teacher, June Sirell, was young enough to teach again, however, and only for a few years. Another blacklisted teacher, David Arkin, died eight months

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<sup>236</sup> Verdries, "Teaching With the Enemy," 264.

<sup>237</sup> Fariello, *Red Scare*, 464; Myrna Oliver, "Frances Eisenberg; Teacher Challenged Firing," Obituary, *Los Angeles Times*, July 26, 1996.

<sup>238</sup> Sloat, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, tape 1, box 2.

<sup>239</sup> Legal Document, "This Agreement, for reference purposes only dated November 1, 1982, is entered into by and between The Los Angeles City Board of Education, a Municipal Corporation (hereinafter referred to as SCHOOL DISTRICT) and David Arkin, by Bea Arkin, surviving spouse and sole heir, Minna Cooper, Frances Eisenberg, Abraham Minkus, and June Sirell (Hereinafter collectively referred to as TEACHERS)," Minkus Papers, folder 7, box 2.

before the settlement.<sup>240</sup> Though the other teachers—Abe Minkus, Minna Cooper, Seril Gerber, and Francis Eisenberg—did not return to teaching in the Los Angeles public schools, they were at least partially vindicated. Their willingness to file the lawsuit, moreover, is a demonstration of both their perseverance so many years after being blacklisted, and their continued willingness to combat injustice.

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<sup>240</sup> David Arkin was the father of the Hollywood actor and comedian Alan Arkin, who starred in many movies, including *The Russians are Coming*, a comedy about a small town in Maine that goes into a panic when a Soviet submarine crashes into the coast.